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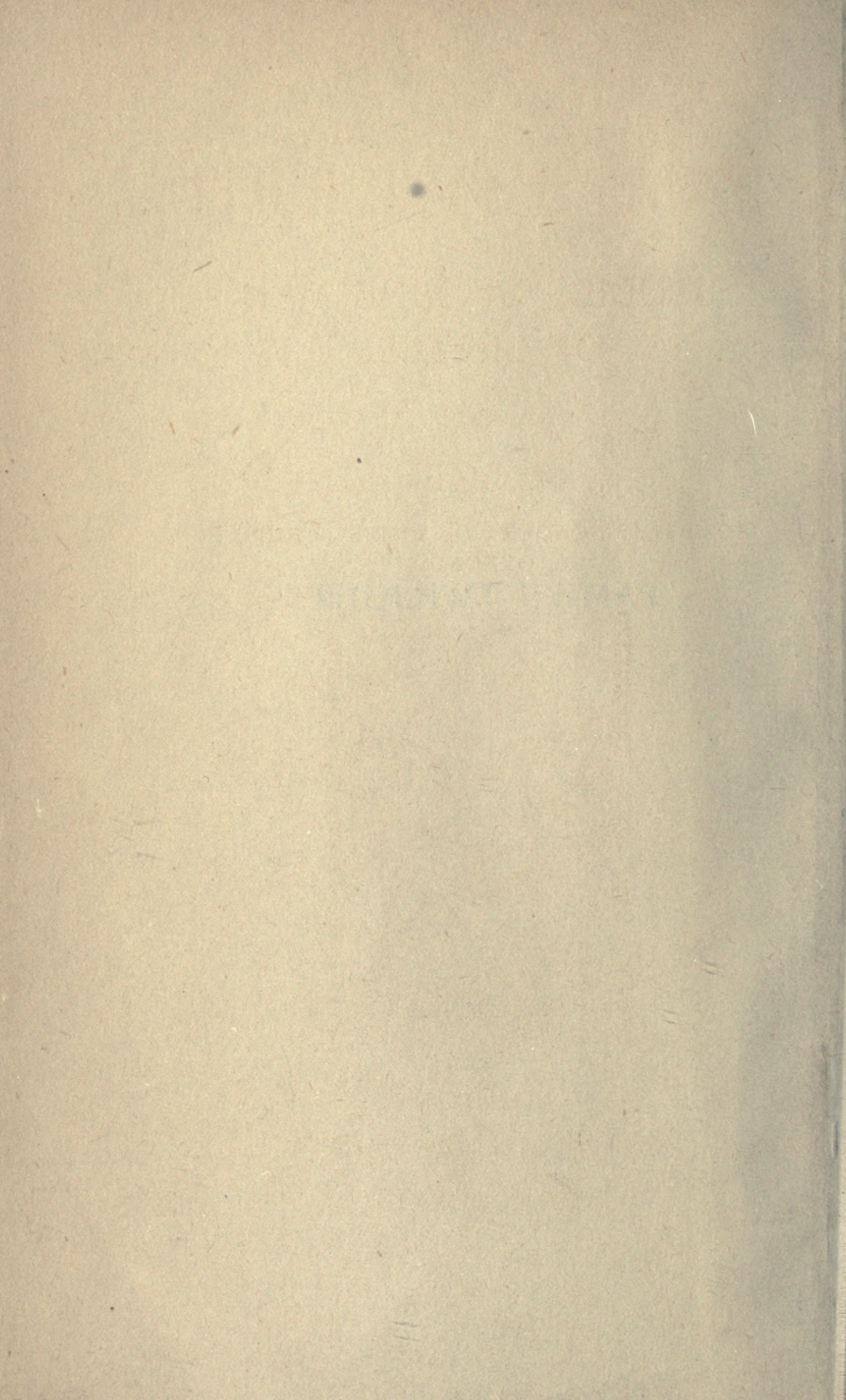






FAME'S TWILIGHT







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# FAME'S TWILIGHT

STUDIES OF NINE MEN  
OF LETTERS

BY

*entirely  
written*  
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SOMETIME SCHOLAR OF CHRIST CHURCH,  
OXFORD.



LONDON

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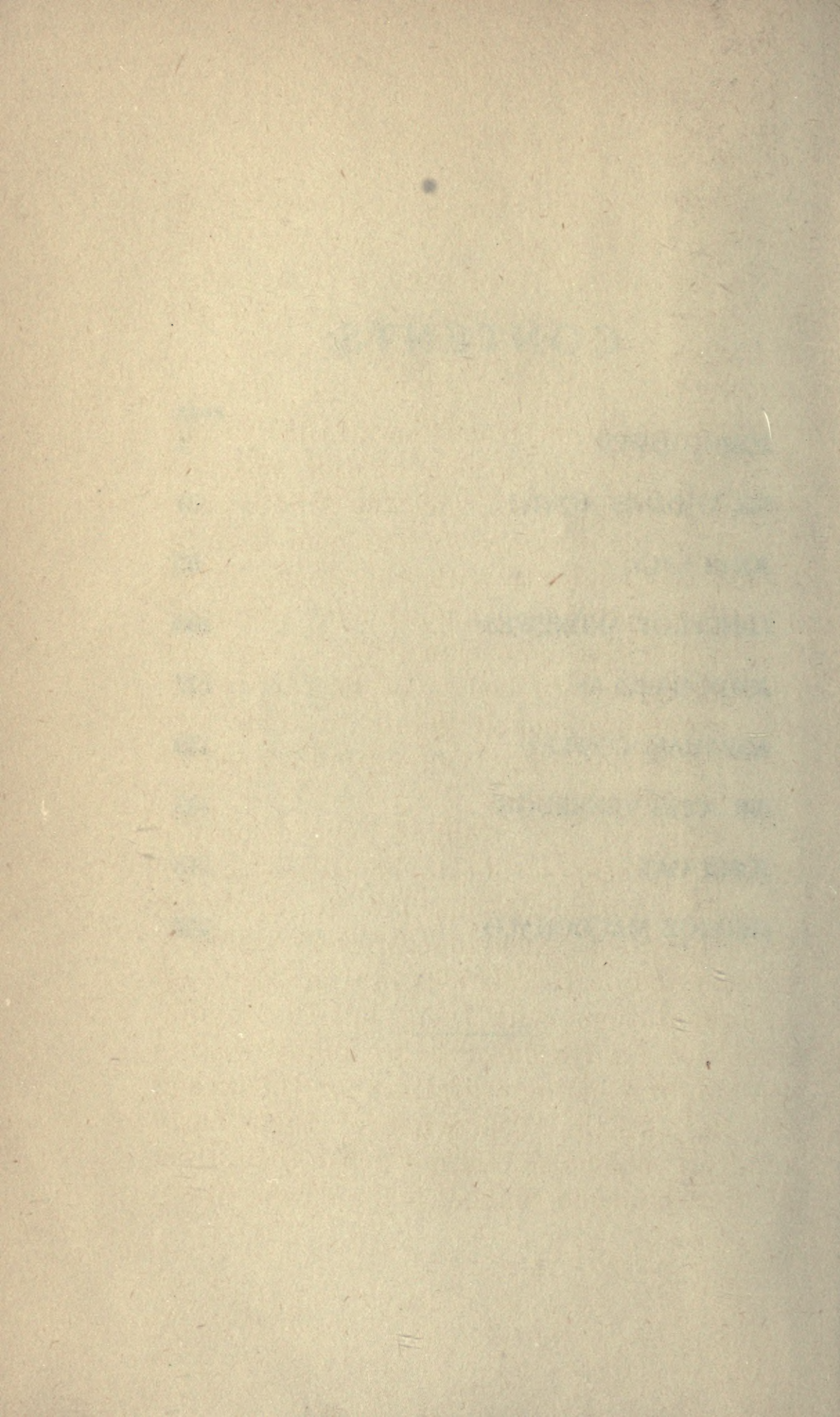


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## FOREWORD.

THE revaluation, from time to time, of our lesser classics is one of the most necessary critical tasks, and the studies contained in this book are the outcome of an intimate acquaintance with the works named herein extending over a good many years. It is to such a re-examination of the manner and content of certain bodies of literary work, whose authors looked giants to their own contemporaries, that I have applied myself in the ensuing pages.

In this I do not think I have disobeyed Arnold's precepts—not to be led astray by historical considerations but to apply to everything the touchstone of the absolutely highest and best. Fashions in literature pass and reputations with them, but the reputations not always deservedly. Many writers are admired in their lifetime for the wrong reason, but the disproving of their early admirers' claims should not debar them from having the same chance as the slower start-



ers of a fame based on more solid grounds. Again, subsequent unanimity as to the pre-eminence of a supremely great artist should not preclude the recognition of a certain though lesser degree of genius in his defeated rival. Nor where an art has fallen almost into disuse should we forget its greatest practitioners in the past. Occasionally, too, a fashion revives, and it is interesting and salutary to note the prototypes of its contemporary exponents, their brief glory, their long oblivion.

A poet friend once came upon me reading a poet of the day before yesterday and reproved me for spending so much time on outworn specimens of the art he himself practised. I replied that his shade would very likely be gratified to find that my grandson inherited my tastes in this respect. He then picked up my book and remarked with surprise that in several chance met phrases this despised writer had anticipated passages of his own.

What really matters is that we shall not, from enthusiasm for our own rediscoveries or sheer reaction from popular neglect, fall into the error of disproportionate praise. Every age has its own points of contact not only with



the acknowledged classics but with those who may be deemed just to have failed to attain that rank. Indeed, he is a bold man who ventures to say where exactly the line is to be drawn between the two classes. In one of his essays Arnold names among the really great English poets, less than a score all told, Campbell and Moore. Contemporary opinion would not with anything approaching unanimity place these two higher than the subjects of some of my essays. And as none of the writers named herein has been judged worthy of inclusion in the series of 'English Men of Letters,' they may with propriety be classed as *Proxime Accessit*.







## CORRIGENDA.

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- Page 34, line 4 from bottom, *insert the after for.*  
,, 135, line 1, *for Andrews read Andrewes.*  
,, 138, line 12, *for Johnson read Jonson.*  
,, 151, line 3, *for Ployarchus read Polyarchus.*  
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## JOHN GOWER.

### § 1.

In the north aisle of the nave of the Cathedral church of St. Saviour, Southwark, on the spot where the chapel of St. John the Baptist is supposed formerly to have stood, is the tomb of John Gower. On the top of it is set the recumbent image of the dead poet, straight and stiff, stretched to his full length, his straight hair bound with a fillet, his face long and austere, his body clothed in a long black cassock, buttoned from the neck to the tip of his down-turned toes, over which the robe is decorously drawn. Round his neck is a collar of SS., and under his head, an honourable but hard pillow, his three books, with their names clearly inscribed—*Vox Clamantis* (the topmost), *Speculum Meditantis*, *Confessio Amantis*.

It would be hard to devise an image more emblematic of austerity, of dignified, decorous, cultured morality. Gower has not the



air of a monk. The man who lies there, you would say, was an ascetic but not a recluse; a puritan but not a fanatic; conservative but not a bigot. Also, you might say, a scholar but not a poet. There the thin nose and compressed lips would, I think, mislead you. Could you but see the eyes, which are decently hidden beneath the down-drawn lids, I think they would belie the mask of his other features. In any case the physiognomy of this statue cannot teach us a very great deal, for Stowe makes it clear that the features had already by his day been considerably 'restored'. But we cannot wonder at the epithet Chaucer, who knew him well, has attached to his name, 'O moral Gower'.

## § 2.

Concerning John Gower's life we have but scanty and uncertain knowledge. Our chief authority is his writings, which, besides the indirect evidence a work of art always yields, in a greater or less degree, as to its maker, contain a few direct personal references. There is also his tomb. Beyond these two sources of knowledge we have only the occurrence of the name or signature 'John Gower'



in a few documents, which may, in a few instances probably, and in a few more possibly, be identified as that of the poet.

Early biographers, such as Leland, made such identifications in the wildest fashion and declared Gower to be possessed of land all over Kent and East Anglia. In one of the more likely cases, which is accepted by Sir Harris Nicolas, one John Gower is said to have received 'the manor of Aldyngton with a rent of 14s.6d., a cock, thirteen hens and a 140 eggs from Maplecomb.' But the obtaining of this manor seems to have been attended by such shady practices that Mr. Macaulay, who in the fourth volume of his edition of Gower's works has collected all the available information, refuses to admit the identification.

It seems certain, however, that the poet was a man of means and held lands in Kent. He may also have held others in Northampton, Norfolk and Suffolk. It may have been he who, by license dated 25 January, 1397, married one Agnes Groundolf. It is certainly he who, by a will dated 15 August 1408, and proved 24 October, 1408, bequeathed monies to certain Southwark churches, and rents in Northampton and Suffolk to his wife. He was living at the time of his death



in the priory of St. Mary Overies, afterward St. Saviour's, which foundation it is probable he had already benefited during his life. It has been alleged, as the result of one of the identifications referred to, that the poet was in holy orders, but this is incompatible with his marriage.

We gather little of real moment from all this except that he was a landed proprietor, who lived an apparently uneventful and pious life; that he wrote *Speculum meditantis*, *Vox Clamantis* (in 1387), *Confessio Amantis* at the request of Richard II, the poet being then something over forty; that he was blind by the second year of Henry IV's reign and died in the early autumn of 1408. Also that he was at least acquainted with the game of tennis.\*

But the most famous thing about Gower today is that he was a friend of Geoffrey Chaucer.

### § 3.

No writer so dominates his age and country as Chaucer does. We think of that 'merrie'

---

\* Of the Tenetz to winne or lese a chace  
Mai no lif wite er that the bal be ronne.

*In Praise of Peace*, l. 295.



England of the fourteenth century as 'Chaucer's England,' of the tongue spoken by the people as 'Chaucer's English.' Even Wyclif's fame pales beside his, and the speech of some four parts of the nation lapses into 'dialect' mainly because it is not his. What chance has Gower, 'moral' Gower, of shining with more than a reflected lustre?

Chaucer and Gower were friends and in some respects friendly rivals. Each alludes to the other in his extant poetry. Chaucer jests in his sly way at his sober fellow poet: Gower incurs suspicion of not being able to take a joke well. But gentle Elia and excellent Bob Southey quarrelled worse than Chaucer and Gower can be said to have done. The reference to Gower by Chaucer, and, as quoted by writers on Chaucer, those the reverse way, are probably the best known things about the old poet today and they may at once be disposed of.

Chaucer, in the dedication of *Troilus and Cressida*, addresses his friends Gower and Strode:

O morall Gower, this book I direct  
 To thee and the philosophicall Strode,  
 To vouchen safe there need is to correct  
 Of your benignites and zeles good.



We know, too, that when Chaucer was sent to Lombardy with Sir Edward Berkely's mission, he appointed Gower one of two attorneys to act for him during his absence.

On the other part, at the end of the *Confessio Amantis*, in the first recension only, occurs the following reference to Chaucer :

And gret wel Chaucer, whan ye mete,  
As mi disciple and mi poete.

The reason, it has been suggested, why this passage is missing in later M. SS. is that the two poets had quarrelled, and the alleged cause of this quarrel is Chaucer's strictures on the tales of Canace and of Apollonius of Tyre said to be implied in the Man of Lawe's words :

"Of swiche cursed stories I say 'fy'."

There is, however, no necessity to presume any such quarrel. A more plausible explanation of the omission is that Chaucer was dead when the later version was made and so beyond the reach of his friend's embassy.

But even if they had had no personal intercourse the collocation of the two poets would be inevitable. In age they were very close. The birth of neither is exactly known, but probably Gower was born about 1325, Chau-



cer about 1340. Both passed their lives in London and Kent, received roughly similar educations and moved in the same circles, though Gower was more of a scholar and country gentleman, Chaucer more of a courtier and public official. Both were well acquainted with the literature, French, Latin and Italian, current in that age, and they used, roughly, the same sources. Both were in the main tellers of tales and not lyric poets. Both were, in politics and religion, essentially moderate men, deploring the time's abuses and favourable to reform, but conservatives and disposed to support the *de facto* government. Yet in their temperament and in their artistic method they are strikingly different.

Chaucer seems naturally to associate himself with the spring, particularly with the month of May. The Canterbury Pilgrims rode forth on their immortal journey in 'Aprille'; but in a score of passages he celebrates the beauty of the succeeding month. It is in May that Emilia's beauty strikes the heart of Palamon and of Arcite, in May, mother of glad months, that Troilus woos fair Cressida.

And the whole mind and art of Chaucer are consonant with this predilection. His world is in its flowering time. His poetry is of the renaissance, creating a new literature in his native tongue, acclaiming the beauty of youth and youthful virtues, of love and loyalty to ideals. His very cynicism is the clever, witty cynicism of youth. His England is full of jingling bells and laughter on the high road, of loaded boards and love talk within doors. He is not without pity, nor need we suppose him without vision of the poverty and distress that lay at his door in those days of the Black Death and the Peasant's Revolt. But these things are not his trade. He sees beauty in the world, and hope, and love; and in these and not in the moral or physical epidemics of the time he finds the eternal themes of poetry. And how could he help the weary and distressed better than by revealing to them that the sources of joy could be found wherever there was humanity, in any rank, to be studied, or English fields in summer time to be looked on?

When Chaucer points a moral, as he frequently does, he does it playfully and because it emphasizes some detail in his story. When,



for example, the *auctor* intervenes in the Clerk's Tale and reviles the fickleness of the mob, it is to emphasize the completeness of Griselda's fall from favour and all human consolation, and thereby to stress her Job-like patience, not from any desire to preach to his fellow sinners. When, again, in the Squire's Tale, he accuses the mob of ascribing always the baser of two possible motives, he is evoking in his readers' minds a true picture of an assemblage of village gossips. We may be sure Chaucer did despise the mob, but he would never have troubled to tell us so if it had not been relevant to his composition.

Very different is Gower. He had less capacity for enjoyment, and less devotion to beauty and to the comeliness and proportion of his work. In other words, he is less of a poet. Also he was more of a moralist. Many of his tales are told badly and with no art, they are merely so many additional lashes upon the prostrate body of one of the Deadly Sins. There is much, very much of the poet in him, but the moralist is for ever cropping up. He seems at times to forget all else in the sheer joy of telling a good story well. Then his hair shirt chafes him and he will

begin to reel off horrible examples of the wages of sin, or make the scheme of his poetic allegory ridiculous by such passages as the denunciation of Paganism, and particularly of the worship of Venus, proceeding from the mouth of her own priest.

Gower, too, says much in praise of May, such phrases are almost common-places in mediaeval literature; but he is not filled, as Chaucer is, with the very breath of the month:

Whan every bird hath chose his mate  
And thenketh his merthes for to make  
Of love, that he hath acheved.

We feel rather, in reading the *Confessio Amantis*, that Gower is an autumnal poet, and that in more ways than one. This may be because this poem, his only long extant piece in English, is the work of his latter days, but it may be doubted if Gower was ever as young as Chaucer was when, in mature life, he wrote *The Canterbury Tales*. Gower is an austere person, and we easily associate him with that long, straight, black recumbent statue of him on his tomb in St. Saviour's. A very skilful writer he was, as a metrist almost Chaucer's equal, writing a long poem of some 30,000 lines, in uniform



metre throughout, and that in short lined couplets, most easy to render monotonous, with spirit, variety and unfailing smoothness.

Yet even in the best of the tales that make up this book we miss that supreme quality which Chaucer has; not by reason of Gower's inferior technique, for, though he has lapses, individual tales are as artistically presented as any except the very best of Chaucer's, but from the lack of that one greatest of gifts, a strong, living and attractive personality. Chaucer, even when he is directly adapting Boccaccio, is always personal, vivid, creative; Gower, even when he departs furthest from his source, seems always to be writing in a vein which is derived from his authorities and his environment. His morals are the result of sound teaching; his knowledge and his literary method, of wide reading and correct judgment.

Chaucer is of May, too, in looking forward. He is, a little prematurely, the first of our moderns, the founder of a great vernacular literature, a true peer of Wyclif in rejecting authority as the sole guide, antiquity as the sole source of knowledge, the old masters as the only models. He uses the

old bottles, but he pours in new wine, and he makes new bottles of his own as well. In *Troilus and Cressida*, though in the main Boccaccio's, we have touches of psychology and a subtlety of manner which seem to fore-run the comedy of Congreve, and in *The Canterbury Tales*, for all their romantic gear, we discern the mental attitude of a Fielding.

How different is Gower, who should have been the last of the Mediaevalists, had the fifteenth century been capable of profiting by Chaucer's unformulated teaching. Chaucer uses the allegory, skilfully but lightheartedly, and finally discards it; Gower builds an enormous allegoric structure (of the precise, moral type, not the later romantic variety best known to us in Spenser) according to the approved mediaeval fashion, and much admirable detail is well-nigh lost in this ill-lit, ill-designed edifice.

#### § 4.

The plan of the *Confessio Amantis* gives no chance to the poem as a whole. The theme is love, but love regarded in a formal, pedantic manner peculiar to the literary circles of the middle ages.



The poet introduces his collection of tales by relating how, being filled by the month of May with a yearning for love, he prayed to Cupid and to Venus for grace. Cupid thereupon threw a dart at him, but Venus enquired into the state of his heart and bad him go and be shriven by her priest. The priest proceeds to consider love in its relation to the Seven Deadly Sins, and examines the stricken poet on these several heads. On the one hand the priest relates stories illustrating the various errors into which lovers may fall, on the other the poet confesses his own state (which is seldom very sinful). 'My lady' remains throughout a very vague and mythical person, and it is not clear whether 'she' is in every case the same. There are, indeed, touches of naturalness in his relation of his failure to shine in her presence, but Chaucer, even in *The Legend of Good Women* or *The House of Fame*, could put more life into his allegoric frame than ever Gower could.

Gower goes on to work out his subdivision of the Art of Love in the mechanical, arithmetical fashion to which the mediaeval mind was so prone. The Seven Deadly Sins are considered under their several parts and a

summary, as thus: Pride—Hypocrisy, Inobedience, Surquederie, Boasting, Vainglory, Summary. Envy—Grudging, Gladness at Others' Grief, Detraction, Dissimulation, Supplantation, Summary. And so with the rest. As a rule there is only one tale to illustrate each subdivision of a sin, but some furnish more. Supplantation, for example, is represented by the stories of Agamemnon and Briseis, of Cressida and Diomedes, of Amphitryon and Alcmene, of the False Bachelor and the Caliph's Daughter, of Pope Boniface and Pope Celestine, of Abner and Achitophel. In length the stories vary from a mere mention in a single line to the romance of Apollonius of Tyre in nearly 2000 lines. But this occurs in the last book, the 8th, and by that time the symmetrical scheme of the poem has been broken. Six books treat of six of the Deadly Sins; book VII proceeds, from a reference to the training of Alexander at the end of book VI, to enlarge on that favourite theme of the mediaeval maker of books, the Duties and Training of a King, and, since Aristotle was Alexander's tutor, a long inaccurate account of the sciences as known to Aristotle is inserted. The four qualities first set forth as necessary in governance are



Truth, Largesse, Pity, and Righteousness. To these he adds the avoidance of the hitherto unconsidered seventh Sin, which is, however, more or less implicit in all the other six when treated in relation to Love, to wit Unchastity, and he can therefore claim to have completed his programme. The eighth book then professes to gather up 'oght overronne, or oght foryete or left behinde', and gives us a rapid outline of the book of Genesis, with some examples of incest, from which point he launches forth into the story of Apollonius.

Finally the poet is absolved by the priest, whereupon he indites a poetical epistle to Cupid and Venus, of which some verses are as charming as anything in the poetry of the age, and make us regret the loss of Gower's earlier and lighter work, such as must have gone to the making of so skilled a metrist. Venus, in answer to this 'supplication', appears, and the poet is granted a vision of the great lovers of legend and romance :

Ther was Tristram, which was beleved  
With bele Ysolde, and Lancelot  
Stod with Gunnore and Galahot\*

---

\* There is no man so chaste as to escape slander!  
Who was this lady? Surely Malory, had he lived a

With his ladi, and as me thoghte  
 I syh where Jason with him broghte  
 His love, which Creusa hihte.

And so on for two hundred lines, wherein the very names ring with the music of old remembrances. Then Cupid plucks forth his dart, and the poet is declared free from all further service in the court of Love. Here occurs, or here is omitted, the reference already quoted to Chaucer, and the poem then ends with a prayer for the good governance of England, a prayer several times rewritten to accord with the revolutions of the day.

To read the poem through as a whole from end to end is not the way to get the most pleasure from it. The parts are indubitably greater than the whole. The whole is dull; the parts, taken singly, are as a rule entertaining. Many of the world's greatest tales appear in Gower's pages, and he tells them worthily. He draws on the usual sources—Ovid and the other Romans, *The Golden Legend*, the Troy legends, in Guido de Colonna's or Benoit de St. Maure's collection, Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Historiale*, and a many more. As a rule he follows his

---

century earlier than he did, would have broken a lance with Gower for such a statement.



original, but he does not hesitate to depart from it on occasions, and not without artistic success. He seems to have been very catholic in his taste, and so little scrupulous that his friend Chaucer, as we have seen, humorously makes his Man of Law protest against the lewdness of certain of his tales.

His stories are not all told with equal skill nor do they seem equally to suit his style. As a rule, the classical tales appear to less advantage than those of a more Gothic cast. The former need to be more formally and delicately beautiful; call, perhaps, for a more fluent and gracious language than the yet raw and ill-articulated English tongue. Moreover Gower, in spite of his moral bluntness in some respects, is always too austere and heavy-handed to do complete justice to the golden beauty of an Hellenic myth. Yet some even among these are admirable. The story of Rosiphele, of Protesilaus and of Alceon in book IV, of Deianira in book II, are good examples. Particularly well suited to Gower's style is such a gruesome story as that of Tereus in Book V, in which he improves on Ovid, being less bloody and introducing a pretty piece of fancy in the symbolism of the

nightingale and the swallow.\* For Gower, though he does here show commendable moderation, takes a most barbaric joy in blood and horror, insisting, for example, twice over on the outrage of Orestes on his mother's corpse.

But the later stories suit his style better. Here he evokes an image like a Dureresque woodcut, and he is both powerful and original. An admirably told story is that of *The Trump of Death* in Book I. Vigorous is the scorn with which the king reproves his brother who had despised his own humility:

'Ha, fol, how thou art for to wite,  
The king unto his brother seth,  
'That thou art of so litel feith,  
That only for a trompes soun  
Hath gone dispuiled through the town  
Thou and thy wife in such manere  
Forth with thy children that ben here  
In sight of alle men aboute  
For that thou seist thou art in doute  
Of deth which stant under the lawe  
Of man, and man it mai withdrawe

---

\* A like improvement on Ovid is in the story of Leucothoe, the lover of the sun-god. In the *Metamorphoses* she is turned by Venus into a mere 'pot of basil'. Gower more kindly represents her as a sunflower ever 'following her sun':

'Sche sprong up out of the molde  
Into a flour, was named golde  
Which stant governed of the Sonne.'



So that it mai per chance faile,  
 Now schalt thou noght forthy mervaile  
 That I doun fro my charr alihte  
 Whanne I beheld to-fore my sihte  
 In hem that were of so gret age  
 Min oghne deth thurgh here ymage,  
 Which God hath set be lawe of kinde,  
 Whereof I mai no bote finde.

. . . . .

The story of the Loathly Bride is admirably told, sustaining even the inevitable comparison with Chaucer's rendering of the same tale, put into the mouth of the immortal Wife of Bath. But in *The Canterbury Tales* the story is almost 'distained' by its own prologue, which, moreover, colours it with its humour. Gower's version differs in several points. He gives the knight's name, Florent, and omits all reference to King Arthur. He makes Florent promise, before the lady will tell him the answer to the enigma, and that after much haggling, that he will wed her. In Chaucer, the knight easily promises to grant whatever his informant may hereafter ask, and she subsequently appears before the Queen and claims him. Gower's version, making it more of a cash transaction, is less in the romantic manner but more convincing. Gower, with an eye to the practical, dwells

on the difficulty of making the hag look like a bride :

She hadde bath, she hadde reste  
 And was arraied to the beste.  
 But with no craft of combes brode  
 Thei myhte her hore lockes schode.

. . . . .  
 Bot whan sche was fulliche arraied  
 And her atyr was al assaied,  
 Tho was sche fouler on to se.

When the marriage comes to be consummated, Florent takes the plunge like a man who after long hesitation enters cold water. Then,

He torneth him al sodeinly  
 And syh a lady lay him by  
 Of eyhtetiene wynter age  
 Which was the faireste of visage,  
 That evere in all this world he syh.

In Chaucer, the wedded and bedded pair hold a long parley, discussing the nice ethical problem: Is it better to have a foul but faithful wife, or one loose and lovely? It must, of course, be remembered that it is not Geoffrey Chaucer who is telling this tale, but the Wife of Bath.

### § 5.

As a metrist Gower is remarkable. Before he came to write his long English poem he



had, we may be sure, written plenty of short ones, though they have not survived; a loss similar to that which is to be deplored in Chaucer's case. Also he had trained his facility in the writing of great lengths of fluent yet varied verse by composition of a long Latin and a long French poem. From the latter tongue in particular he would have learned, as did Wyatt in one later age and Waller in another, to be smooth and prosodically 'correct'. It is indeed little short of a miracle how easily and sweetly Gower makes his rather stiff and angular language flow. Compared with the crudities of his predecessors, or even with the monotonous jog-trot of his contemporary, Barbour, he is Hyperion to a Satyr. Chaucer himself is not a more accomplished craftsman, and his immediate successors, Lydgate and Occleve, cannot even profit by his example. Except for the closing invocation the whole of the *Confessio Amantis* is in octo-syllabic couplets, to which he imparts frequent and apt modifications of rhythm. He uses most skilfully such repetitions as 'He waiteth time, he waiteth place', or

Torne it to wo, torne it to wele,  
Torne it to good, torne it to harm.

which break effectively the fluent lines, with level stresses in the French mode, which make up the mass of his verse. He can quicken his rhythm, too, with such lines as

The night was dark, there shone no mone,  
To-fore the gates he came sone.

He shows something of Spenser's art in his description of the House of Sleep :

Under an hell ther is a cave  
Which of the sonne mai nocht have,  
So that no man may knowe ariht  
The point between the dai and nyht,  
There is no fyr, ther is no sparke,  
There is no dore which mai charke,  
Wherof an yhe scholde unshette,  
So that inward ther is no lette.  
And for to speke of that withoute  
Ther stant no gret tre nyh aboute  
Wherof there myhte crowe or pie  
Alihte for to clepe or crie.  
Ther is no cok to crowe day,  
Ne beste none which noise may,  
The hell, bot al aboute round  
Ther is growende upon the ground  
Popi, which berith the sed of slep,  
With othre herbes such an hep,  
A stille water for the nones  
Rennende upon the smale stones  
Which hihte of Lethes the rivere,  
Under that hell in such manere  
Ther is, which yifh great appetit  
To slepe. And thus full of delit  
Slep hath his hous, and of his couche  
Withinne his chambre if I schal touche  
Of hebenus that slepi tree



The bordes al aboute be,  
 And for he scholde slepe softe  
 Upon a fethrebed alofte  
 He lith with many a pilwe of doun.

Read with the proper distribution of stress, with a broad pronunciation of the vowels and due observance of the now mute e, where not elided, no verse can be more satisfying to the tongue or to the ear.

Here is yet one more sample of Gower's skill, from the story of Rosiphele:

Sche sih the swote floures springe,  
 Sche herde glade foules singe.  
 Sche sih the bestes in her kinde  
 The buck, the do, the hert, the hinde,  
 The male go with the female  
 And so began there a querele  
 Between love and her oghne herte  
 Fro which sche couthe noght asterte.

Nor was his skill limited to this one metre. The 'supplication', in stanzas of seven decasyllabic lines, is equally polished.

Upon miself if thilke tale come  
 Hou whilom Pan, which is the god of kinde,  
 With Love wrastlede and was overcome ;  
 For ever I wrastle and evere I am behinde,  
 That I no strengthe in al min herte finde  
 Whereof that I mai stonden eny throwe ;  
 So fer mi wit with love is overthrowe.

That is almost Jacobean in its mellow harmony. Still better, perhaps, are some parts of the short poem called *In Praise of Peace*,

one of the very few of Gower's shorter pieces to survive. Such a line as

For vein honour or for the worldes good  
has the authentic ring of the 'mighty line.'

### § 6.

Humour is not Gower's strong point. Indeed it is notably lacking to the reader new-come to his pages from those of Chaucer, who can hardly refrain from revealing the comic lining to his most tragic clouds. But he employs at times a certain wittiness of phrase, and even displays humour of a pawky type which gains in effectiveness from its rarity.

He seide, nay. Thei seiden, yis.  
The lettre shewed, rad it is,  
Which thei forsoken everidel

There is a vivacity of manner in such lines as these which contributes its share to the freshness of the long poem. His jesting reference to Aristotle in the vision of lovers shows that Gower was no mirthless pedant:

I syh there Aristotle also  
Whom that the queene of Grece so  
Hath bridled, that in thilke time  
Sche made him such a silogime  
That he foryat al his logique.



Pleasant too are the pithy saws and popular sayings which he frequently introduces into his polished verse. The appearance of their familiar faces is continually giving the reader a pleasant surprise—'between two stoles is the fall,' 'Lo, how thei feignen chalk for chese', 'And as a cat wolde ete fishes, Withoute wetinge of his cles.'

In yet another vein he achieves a witty, satiric epigram in the course of a dissertation, by the priest, on Avarice (*C. A.*, Book V):

Whil that a man hath good to yive  
 With grete routes he mai live  
 And hath his frendes overal  
 And everich of him telle shal.  
 Therwhile he hath his fulle packe,  
 They say, 'A good felawe is Jacke'.  
 But whanne it faileth atte last,  
 Anone his pris thei overcaste.  
 For thanne is ther non other lawe  
 But 'Jacke was a good felawe'.

### § 7.

It would not be fair to Gower's memory to leave him without paying a tribute to the love of his country which he shows in every part of his work. His substitution of Henry for Richard as the addressee of the *Confessio Amantis* has exposed him to the charge of

being a turncoat. This, however, is quite undeserved. Gower was no politician. He hated all extremes and all illegalities, denouncing alike the rich who oppress the poor and the poor who rob and murder the rich. In his attitude towards the reformers of the age he is at one with the author of *Piers Plowman* and Wyclif, but he sternly rebukes the Lollards, to whom his attitude is not unlike that of Wordsworth towards the Revolutionaries. He shrinks appalled from the means by which it is sought to bring about desirable ends. To Richard as King of England he appeals, urging him to act for the country's welfare. But Richard had disappointed his early hopes and had shown that he lacked the first essential in the head of a government, the power to keep internal order. When Henry comes to the fore, Gower appeals to him with the same end in view. Dynasties mattered little, the welfare of the country mattered much. There is nothing to show that he was ever a partisan of Richard as against Henry, or was under any personal obligation to him.

It is in especial for peace and unity that Gower ever prays, and that the King will remember that



Ther may non erthly kyng suffice  
Of his kyngdom the folk to lede,  
Bot he the Kyng of Hevene drede,

in the beautiful poem *In Praise of Peace*, the most eloquent expression of Gower's sincere and wise patriotism. The same theme inspires his long Latin poem, *Vox Clamantis*, which is one long outpouring of the poet's grief over the moral decay of his well loved England.

#### § 8.

This poem and the French *Miroir* are not likely to find many readers, and little need be said of them. The French poem was the earliest of the three, and for a long while was known only from its use as the poet's pillow on his tomb and from a reference at the close of the *Vox Clamantis*. In both places it is spoken of as *Speculum Meditantis*. Recently, however, Mr. Macaulay discovered a M. S. in the Cambridge University library. Here it is entitled *Le Mirour de l'Omme*. The theme of the poem is marriage, and though it has been praised for the correctness of its French and of its prosody, it is the least interesting as well as the shortest of the three long poems. It is a formal, artifi-

cial piece, thoroughly mediaeval in its conception and dull in its execution.

The Latin poem, *Vox Clamantis*, is a more interesting and personal utterance. Here, too, in the current fashion, the poet fabricates a dream, in which he undergoes sundry allegorical adventures. Men in the fields are turned into beasts, and one terrible Boar ranges through Kent and another comes from the north. The poet flees to a ship and there is tossed in a great storm. Then one William, a mayor, strikes down one of the monsters and the storm subsides. The events symbolized by all this—the Peasants' revolt, the siege of the Tower, and the death of Wat Tyler—are easy to recognize. Gower then proceeds to examine the causes of the present discontents, and arraigns the three degrees of society—clergy, knights, and peasantry—for their respective vices. He concludes with an appeal to the king as the power from which in the last resort all good must flow.

Of the earnest patriotism of the poem I have already spoken. The Latinity is good, judged by the standard of the age, but the elegiac couplet lacks here the grace and sweetness of the true Roman style. It abounds, however, in those ingenuities to



which the metre has ever lent itself. It is thus, for instance, that the poet proclaims his name :

Primos sume pedes Godefridi, desque Johanni  
Principiumque sui Wallia jungat eis :  
Ter caput amittens det cetera membra, que tali  
Carmine compositi nominis ordo patet.

And thus the date of the composition :

Tolle caput mundi, C ter et sex lustra fer illi,  
Et decies quinque cum septem post super adde:  
Tempus tale nota, qui tunc fuit Anglia mota.

### § 9.

There is perhaps nothing of the highest poetry in Gower. He does not make us see visions, or feel more intensely any of the great emotions of human life. He does not light up the dark places of man's soul, laying bare motives or analysing thoughts. He tells his stories plainly or prettily, wisely and, at times, wittily, turning aside not at all to elaborate the character of any of his personages or theorize on the why and the wherefore. The priest points out the moral bearing of the tales, but in general terms and with no enhancement of the value of the stories as works of art. Gower is thoroughly mediaeval in his method of proving his general laws by a simple enumeration of instances, piling

instance upon instance with very little niceness of discrimination.

Yet Gower is a true poet. He feels for and with the personages of his tales, and by his choice of words conveys to us not the bare facts only, but something of the atmosphere in which his imagination sees them happen, something, too, of his own feelings of pity or scorn. The tales would not, to meet the obvious criticism, be equally well told in prose. A prose version of the stories is certainly possible and does in many cases exist; but the reader of prose demands a more exact story and a greater verisimilitude. The melody and ingenuity of verse rightly disarm criticism in this respect; they enable the mind to acquiesce in certain conventions in which it is very pleasant to acquiesce. Prose is the language of reason, and when addressed in it we are all of the family of Didymus. The prose romancer has indeed his own way of overcoming our doubts, or of evading them. But the poet's way is the older and better way. He does not give the Cerberus of our logical mind a cake, that looks like the real thing but is not. Like Orpheus he wins his way by the power of melody.



## SIR THOMAS NORTH.

### § 1.

**I**T IS a curious fact that though most persons with any literary knowledge associate Plutarch in English with the name of Thomas North, yet other, later translations have for two centuries and more had a much wider vogue. There is one popular reprint of North to half-a-dozen of his rivals, and the old book-shops will almost always yield an eighteenth century Langhorne, or a so-called Dryden (of which version the best known nineteenth century edition, Clough's, is a revision).

But it was in North's magnificent prose that Englishmen from the days of Shakespeare and Raleigh to the days of Milton and Marlborough read that great and unrivalled collection of the life stories of heroes, and learned from their examples to make life a high adventure and to spend themselves in the service of the community.

For this surely is Plutarch's glory, not that he was a great historian tracing the progress of a nation or of an institution, but the celebrant of great deeds and great men, giving us by anecdote and pithy analysis the characters and motives, the very form and pressure of the Hero. And Plutarch's heroes are so full of warmth and spirit, so human and so gallant, that the reader of generous blood is fired to emulation and resolves to serve England with no less love and endurance than Themistocles served Athens, or Coriolanus Rome; to pursue fame no less eagerly than Alexander; to preserve honour and justice no less firmly than Numa Pompilius. It is for this combination of true virtue with Renaissance *vertu*, or godliness with manliness, a kind of *splendid morality*, that Plutarch's pages are to be prized, and it was for this that North, an Elizabethan of the finest type, serving Gloriana (who is England rather than Elizabeth) no less with his pen than he was ever ready to serve her with his sword, rendered the *Lives* into his native tongue. And this achievement, the central one of his life, was typical of all the rest of it.



## § 2.

Thomas North was one of that most estimable of English breeds, the country gentlemen, and one who remained all his life unusually true to type. His father had been raised to the peerage, but to Thomas, as a younger son, that made little difference. He went to court, but only, it would seem, to display his loyalty; he never held any kind of post there and seems to have been unambitious of court advancement. But we have very few details of his life, and a great deal of what might pass for his biography (which has never been written at any length) would have to be conjectural.

He was born about the year 1535, the son of Sir Edward North of Kirthling. Of his education nothing is known, but it is thought that he may have been entered at Peterhouse, Cambridge, of which foundation his father had been a benefactor. The first certain fact about him is that in 1557 we find him in London, residing in Lincoln's Inn, of which he was a member. From here, at the age of 22 or thereabouts, he dated his first book, *The Diall of Princes*, an English version, through the French, of the Spanish

*Lo Relox de Principes* by Antonio de Guevara, a book of anecdotes and moral disquisitions for the edification of princes. His object in translating it almost certainly was not a mere desire for literary fame, nor yet zeal for pure learning. The motive of North's life was, as was typical of his class and age, patriotism. He sincerely hoped to help his country to good government by translating this already famous book, which he loyally dedicated to Queen Mary.

His second undertaking was of a similar nature. It also was a translation, and of a work of a moral character pertaining to the science of government, albeit North was too well acquainted with the tastes of his own kind to choose a book that lacked a notable attractiveness in its lighter elements. This second work was *The Morall Philosophie of Doni*, a rendering of the Florentine version of the *Fables of Bidpai*, one of the oldest collections of beast-tales in the world. This appeared in 1570.

While still quite young North had married Elizabeth, daughter of Jeffrey Colvile, of Newton in the Isle of Ely. Two children, Edward and Elizabeth, are mentioned in the will of his father, Edward, 1st Lord North,



which is dated 20 March, 1563. Thus Thomas, true to his character of country gentleman, married a neighbour (though Jeffrey Colville is described in this connection as of London and owned property in Kent as well as in Cambridgeshire), and his two children here mentioned also married in the neighbourhood, Edward marrying one Elizabeth Wren, of Haddenham, in the Isle; Elizabeth, Thomas Stuteville, of Brinkley in Cambridgeshire. North's own second wife was Judith Vesey, of Isleham, also in Cambridgeshire. These genealogical details are interesting as suggesting a marked homekeeping instinct in Thomas North's strain.

He must himself by this time have established a personal connection with Cambridgeshire, for in 1568 he was granted the freedom of the City of Cambridge. Nevertheless in 1574 he accompanied his brother Roger, now the 2nd Lord North, to France on state business; and here, it is likely, he met one whose influence decided the exact nature of his after-fame, Jaques Amyot, Bishop of Auxerre. Five years later he published his translation, after Amyot's French, of Plutarch's *Lives*. With this, strange to say, his publications end (except for a few ad-

ditions and a new dedication to the third edition of Plutarch), though his public activities are far from doing so. Plainly it was no *cacoethes scribendi* that urged Thomas North into authorship. He was never either a professed scholar or a man of letters. He was throughout his life a country gentleman, serving the Queen's Majesty in the capacity that best became him, with pen or sword, in the field or on the bench. In the Armada year he assumed command of 300 men of Ely, and he was knighted in 1591. I should like also to believe that he is the Sir Thomas North who is stated in a M. S. preserved at Hatfield to have commanded a company of 100 men on service in Ireland during Tyrone's rebellion; though it does not need this last signal instance to make me sure that unassuming and unswerving devotion to his country was the guiding principle of North's life, alike in his literary labours and in practical affairs.

He is supposed to have died about the year 1601.

### § 3.

A closer examination of North's writings will confirm the impression of the civic pur-



pose, that, together with a strong natural instinct for the art of writing prose, informs his work. At the same time it may be judged how remarkable was his skill in the choice of words and in their manipulation, and his sense of rhythm.

It may be remarked, first, that the dedications of his translated books are the only original compositions of North's we have. Though in the first class of prose-writers of his age, and displaying even in translation a strong and charming personality, North seems never to have attempted any direct expression of his views. He may have known his own limitations better than we do: he may have been over-diffident. His modesty is evident and honourable. In the presence of so many master minds, whose works had been acclaimed by all the peoples of Europe, how should the simple Cambridgeshire gentleman seek to air his own views, while these others were still unknown, or imperfectly known, to Englishmen?

The work to the translation of which he devoted his earliest labours was at that time one of the most celebrated and widely read books in the world. Guevara was a courtier of the Emperor Charles V, as well as a Bish-

op and a renowned preacher. In 1528 there was printed at Seville a volume called *Libro aureo de Marco Aurelio: emperador: y eloquentissimo orador*. In the following year there was printed at Valladolid the *Libro de Marco Aurelio cō relox de principes*, the author of which, it was added, is the Bishop of Guadix. This second book is several times longer than the first, the whole of which it incorporates, and Guevara, at that time Bishop of Guadix, asserted that the early version was unauthorized and printed from stolen copy. But the shorter book offered obvious advantages to publishers and translators, and both versions therefore continued to be current, not only in Spain but in all the tongues of civilized Europe. In England the *Libro aureo* found an illustrious translator in Lord Berners, who, in the last years of his life, translated it, through the French, under the title of *The golden Book of Marcus Aurelius*. This was published after Berners' death, the first extant edition being dated 1535. It was frequently reprinted, but the longer, authorized version of the book was never translated into English till North took it in hand and published it under the title of *The Diall of Princes* (*Relox de principes*) in



1557. To the three books here contained he added, in 1568, a fourth book entitled *The Favoured Courtier*, which is a translation of a later book of Guevara's, *Libro llamado aviso de privados*, not published in Spain till 1539.

*The Diall*, like *The Golden Book*, achieved wide popularity, and Guevara's other works also attained some vogue, finding translators in Geoffrey Fenton and Edward Hellowes.\* Some modern critics regard this high popularity of Guevara, even in the dress provided for him by North, as a sign of the defective taste of the Elizabethan public. One wonders whether, when Elizabethan England and Georgian Fleet Street disagree, it may safely be assumed that it is necessarily the modern who is the superior. Those who like the rotund but perspicuous phrases of the best Tudor prose will enjoy *The Diall*. They will

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\* North himself, though possibly he did not know it, translated at the very end of his life another of Guevara's books. In 1567 an edition of Amyot's Plutarch was published containing a version by S. G. S. (Simon Goulard) of Guevara's *Una decada de las vidas de los X Emperadores romanos, desde Trajano a Alexandro*, a book translated by Hellowes as *A Chronicle, conteyning the lives of tenne Emperors of Rome*, (1577). These same Lives are added to the third edition (1603) of North's Plutarch.

know that it is idle to look in such a book for a properly scaled and surveyed study of any theme. To the making of the mediaeval book there was literally no end. It was bounded only by the extent of the author's knowledge of the universe, and, further, by the library he had at his command. Almost all books were compilations of older material, most authors literary jackdaws of very acquisitive tastes. Guevara's book has been described as a didactic novel, and as a version of the *Meditations*. It is certainly didactic, as practically all prose literature of those ages was, but it is not in any sense a novel, and it has no connection with the *Meditations* other than the name of Marcus Aurelius, who is the supposed author or recipient of the letters and rhetorical effusions of which the book consists.

The ground of its appeal to North is plain. It is throughout a plea for moderation and modesty, in politics and in behaviour; even, though Guevara was an Inquisitor, for toleration in religion. Guevara is diffuse and prolix, but he gives an impression of honesty and breadth of mind, and sets forth the evils of the misuse of power, which must recoil on the head of its wielder, the need for orderly



government and of true religion, the nature of education and of a mother's duty to her children, of the importance of sobriety in eating and in apparel, the blessings of peace, the relations to be observed between the sexes and between rich and poor, and a score of such topics, all directed to the improvement of social conditions in the contemporary state, on the assumption that the Prince was the fountain-head of all moral excellence as well as of honour. To the serious-minded young gentleman of the East Midlands (the most enlightened part of England and the most distressed by the accidents of the times) in the days of the Marian troubles, the need for such a sane, equable, moderate state of mind as Guevara inculcates was very plain. All North's writings were directed to this same end.

To the reader the same qualities would appeal. The reader of that day was, where books were concerned, a serious person and had not yet acquired that all-absorbing passion for the novel form which afflicts our own generation. Yet he too liked a touch of the personal element, the 'story' quality so dear to the modern journalist, when he could get it. So allegory was the accepted mode of pre-

senting moral truths, and the incidental anecdotes, rather than the very loose threads of the Emperor's biography, were the sugar that helped the consumption of the moral medicine of *The Diall*. The modern reader finds the book too heavy to read in bulk, but his Elizabethan forebear was nurtured on tougher stuff and thought this light and pleasant fare, albeit wholesome and nourishing; and since he had few books he did not cavil at the great length (over 400,000 words) of this one. So it came about that in all languages the book was amazingly popular, and the English reader of *The Diall* had in addition the advantage of reading the prose of a great master.

The terms of Mary's title alone would lend distinction to any dedication:

To the most high and virtuous princess Mary, by the Grace of God Queen of England, Spain, France, both Sicilies, Jerusalem, Naples, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, Archduchess of Austria, Duchess of Burgundy, Milan and Brabant, Countess of Hapsburg, Flanders and Tyrol, long health and perpetual felicity.

He goes on:

The Divine Philosopher Plato, most gracious sovereign Lady, travailing all his life time to abolish the barbarous manners of the Grecians and to induce a civil form of living among the people,



ordained a law to the great comfort of those that followed virtue and no less to the terror of others that haunted vices. The which commanded, that not only those which brought in or invented any new thing that might either corrupt the good manners, violate the ancient customs, hinder through evil example the good living, empoison with erroneous doctrine the consciences, effeminate with voluptuous pleasures the heart, impoverish with unprofitable merchandise the people or defame with malicious words the renowns, should be (as unprofitable members) from the common wealth expelled and banished: but also ordained that those which studied to publish any institution appertaining either to the honour of the gods, to the reformation of the frailty of men, or by any other means to the profit of the weal public, should be condignly of the common wealth entertained, preferred and honoured.

On these grounds, he declares, Don Antony of Guevara is highly to be praised, for all his writings are to the glory of God and the profit of His people, but most especially this one, *Lo relox de principes*, for

there is no author (the sacred letters set apart) that more effectually setteth out the omnipotency of God, the frailty of men, the inconstancy of fortune, the vanity of this world, the misery of this life, and finally that more plainly teacheth the good which mortal men ought to pursue and the evil that all men ought to fly, than this present work doth. The which is so full of high doctrine, so adorned with ancient histories, so authorized with grave sentences and so beautified with apt similitudes, that I know not whose eyes in reading it can be wearied, nor whose ears in hearing it not satisfied.

This passage, particularly the last lines, shows North in his most rhetorical mood, as the occasion, a Royal dedication, requires. His style is not ordinarily so elaborate as this and the suggestion that it was to this book of his that all that kind of writing known as Euphuism is due is now generally regarded as going too far. The art of prose was just then being much studied, and North is already one of its masters; but he was not alone even at this date in using rhetorical devices of various kinds, and Lyly, whose *Euphues* displays the highest contemporary level of 'conceited' writing, might well have written as he did without any reference to *The Diall*. Doubtless he knew *The Diall*: probably every living writer did; but it is only one among many exemplifications of a current fashion. North himself did not develop the 'conceited' element in his own style. *The Favoured Courtier* of 1568 has less of it than the original three books of *The Diall*, and in his later works he is rather notably free from it.

#### § 4.

*The Diall* is a translation through French of a Spanish original, and as some of the letters appended to it are stated not to be 'in



the French copy', North may be credited with some knowledge of the Spanish tongue. His second book gives further proof of linguistic skill, being a translation from an Italian version of the fables of Bidpai, a collection which experts in folk-lore trace back to Sanskrit and Pali originals more than a thousand years before Doni or North. The title of this book, which was printed in 1570, runs :

The Morall Philosophie of Doni: Drawne out of the Auncient writers. A work first compiled in the Indian tongue, and afterwards reduced into divers other languages: and now lastly Englished out of Italian by Thomas North, Brother to the Right Honourable Sir Roger North Knight, Lorde North of Kyrtheling.

This is one of the most entertaining books of beast fables ever compiled, and North is justified in drawing attention, in his words 'To the Reader', to the sequence and cohesion of the stories :

The stories, fables and tales, are very pleasant and compendious. Moreover the similitudes and comparisons doe (as they say) holde hands one with the other, they are so linked together . . . . . If you do not read in their proper order, you shall thinke them ryding tales spoken to no purpose, but to occupie your eares, and consume.

Which would seem to suggest that Thomas North did not greatly esteem *The Canter-*







The King bade him stande up, and willed him to tell the cause why he kept so long in those fields, and what hee ment to braye and rore so terribly. The Bull tooke upon him the oratores part, and standing aside from the beginning to the ende he tolde him the whole discourse of his miseris . . . . The King wondering at his yeares, commanded streight stables should be provided for his Lordship, and gave him an infinite number of servaunts to wayte upon him, making him Prince of Bulles, Duke of Beefes, Marquesse of Calves, and Earle and Lorde great Maister of Kyne: and with a wonderful great provision he furnished hys rackes yearly, and made him of his privie counsell. After he had employed him a while hee knewe his worthiness and discretion: so that in the ende he made him Viceroy and greatest Lorde of his Realme.

North here employs, too, a livelier and racier mode of conducting dialogue than the more serious, episcopal utterance of Guevara had admitted. The free use of vernacular words and phrases is an excellence of his as of all the best Tudor prose. Here is a passage from the edifying history 'of three great fishes:'

And the thirde was called of the Frogge ten times that hee shoulde rise and awake: whooe, but all in vayne.

He punched him for the nonste, and jogged hym agayne to make him awake, but it woulde not be. And he, tut, lyke a sluggarde, answered hym,

"I will ryse anone, anone: I pray thee let me alone a while, let me lye yet a little curtesie and then have with thee."



Stil the Fishers went on apace with their nets,  
and let go the water.

On the other hand he can describe a scene with a simple charm and easy rhythm that is far removed from the ornate and witty mode of Lyly or Sidney:

There dwelled a great Paragone of India (of those that live a hundreth yeares and never mue their feathers), a bird of the water, aire, and earth, in a great thicke close knot of Rosemaire uppon a pleasaunt Lake, placed beneath amongst the little hilles spred over with herbes and flowers. And always in his youth he lived (as his nature is) of fishe, the which with some devise he tooke by moon light with great sweat and labor.

Such writing may have involved North, as his prefatory note suggests, in 'travayle'; it certainly does not inflict on us 'painefull reading'.

This book is of extreme rarity. There appear to have been but two editions, one in 1570, the other in 1601; and Mr. Jacobs, who edited a reprint in 1888, could trace only a single complete copy of each. It would seem therefore as if it did not attain the popularity of North's other two productions, and being regarded as a 'slight, unmeritable' piece, the copies that were current were not preserved with any care.

## § 5.

Our author's third and last work was in all respects his finest. It is the finest original, both in its matter and its manner, and North's own style here attains its full excellence.

*Plutarch's Lives . . . Englished by Sir Thomas North*, appeared in 1579, with a dedication to Queen Elizabeth which again emphasizes the practical, moral purpose of the work :

For among all the profane books, that are in reputation at this day, there is none (your Highness best knows) that teacheth so much honour, love, obedience, reverence, zeal and devotion to Princes, as these lives of Plutarch do. How many examples shall your subjects read here, of several persons and whole armies, of noble and base, of young and old, that both by sea and land, at home and abroad, have strained their wits, not regarded their states, ventured their persons, cast away their lives, not only for the honour and safety, but also for the pleasure of their Princes? \*

The same note is sounded in his prefatory address 'To the Reader', in which he further declares his love for Plutarch, the author of 'the profitablest story of all authors', and refers his reader to Amyot's words, in the

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\* So Plutarch speaks of Solon as 'a perfect example and looking glass wherein men may see how to govern a popular state'.



like place, concerning 'the profit of stories'. Here Amyot insists on the teaching as well as the delight to be sought in books, and praises the writers of history above all others for making these two go arm in arm. 'History', he continues,

'is the very treasure of man's life, whereby the notable doings and sayings of men, and the wonderful adventures and strange cases (which the long continuance of time bringeth forth) are preserved from the death of forgetfulness . . . there is neither picture, nor image of marble, nor arch of triumph, nor pillar, nor sumptuous sepulchre, that can match the durableness of an eloquent history . . . it is a certain rule and instruction, which by examples past teacheth us to judge of things present, and to foresee things to come . . . Likewise . . . the immortal praise and glory wherewith it rewardeth well doers, is a very lively and sharp spur for men of noble courage and gentlemanlike nature, to cause them to adventure upon all manner of noble and great things. For books are full of examples of men of high courage and wisdom, who for desire to continue the remembrance of their name, by the sure and certain record of histories, have willingly yielded their lives to the service of the common weal, have spent their goods, sustained infinite pains both of body and mind in defence of the oppressed, in making common buildings, in stablishing of laws and governments, and in the finding out of arts and sciences necessary for the maintenance and ornament of man's life: for the faithful registring whereof, the thank is due to histories.'

In particular, asserts Amyot, and North would entirely agree with him, historians

are delightful and profitable to princes and kings, who are otherwise most subject to flattery and have least time for self-improvement. In brief, North might regard the book as another *Diall of Princes*.

But the present book is a far more valuable gift to his countrymen than the earlier one. The *Diall of Princes* was not, in its original, one of the world's great masterpieces: Plutarch's *Lives* was. North's translation of *The Diall* is a 'green and youthful' production, though skilful, interesting and distinguished already for its style among the prose books of a not very skilful age. Since 1557 English prose had progressed. Lyly had outshone North in sheer decorativeness, and the general level of narrative and expository prose had wonderfully risen. A decade was now reached which saw published the work of Sidney, Bacon, Hooker, Raleigh and Shakespeare (a supremely great prose-writer), not to mention a score of lesser men of an excellence in this art hardly known to the preceding generation. But North had progressed too, and could write with as much vigour and pregnancy of phrase as the best of them. All good Tudor prose has a freedom, a copiousness, a touch of splendour in its verbiage and



of athletic vigour in the handling of it hardly to be matched in any other age. Much of its richness is due to the youthfulness of the language, which made possible an abandon and an audacity not to be looked for in its reasonable, sober, practised maturity. To these qualities common to his generation North adds very distinguished ones of his own—the reflections of his personality—simple directness, dignity, self-control, an utter absence of pedantry, and a reverence for the heroic which makes his pages ring with the authentic accents of his heroes.

#### § 6.

Plutarch's *Lives* is one of the world's great books, but it is open to question whether Plutarch is really one of the world's great writers. He was born at Chaeronea in about the year 50 B. C., a Greek provincial in an age of Grecian decadence. He is not a great stylist and though a most interesting and alert-minded person not above the suspicion of being a thought too markedly a dilettante man of letters, rather than a scholar either in philosophy or history.

Plutarch and North must have been very different men, yet they have a good deal in

common. Both were country gentlemen, with a strong instinct for law and order and the temperate morality that fits their type. They had a strong local patriotism as well as a wider national one and both wrote for the edification of their own kind. But Plutarch did not live in an heroic society; North, the fellow of Raleigh and Humphrey Gilbert, of Drake and Grenville, of Philip Sidney and Francis Vere, certainly did; and Plutarch hardly rises to the height of his own great argument so surely as North (and Amyot) does.

If the Langhorne or Clough translated Plutarch more faithfully than North, it is a measure not only of their superior knowledge of the original (and of their better text) but of the inferiority of their age. An Elizabethan could not translate faithfully in the sense in which the nineteenth century understood it. The individuality of the men and of their language was too strong to subdue itself wholly to the stuff they wrought in. North and Philemon Holland and Angel Day and the translators of the Bible, and even such imperfect craftsmen as Nichols, the Tudor translator of Thucydides, are too full-flavoured to represent truthfully the



taste of their originals. Plutarch possessed indeed the great merit of simplicity, and herein North resembles him, but the translator was surely a tougher, more active, deeper and more impassioned person than the pleasant, inquisitive, garrulous historiographer. North has the air of being a more practical person than Plutarch and gifted also with a more vivid imagination. In part it arises from the qualities of their respective languages, in part from their own characters, that North tends to use more concrete language, and to keep the pictured scene more constantly before his readers. Thus in North's version, when the stranger suborned by Thales has told Solon that he has seen at Athens 'a young man carried to burial, whom all the city followed', Solon, growing anxious, enquires 'if he were not the son of Solon which was buried', recalling to our minds the scene of the funeral procession. Plutarch and his more literal translators write only 'which was dead.' When the heroic Mucius Scaevola holds his right hand over the fire, North says that 'the flesh of the hand did fry off.' The specifically culinary word 'fry', which gives grim point to the

phrase, is his own. Plutarch used only a general word 'burning' (*καιομένης τῆς σαρκός*).

Similarly North translates in the best sense of the term by taking over not mere words but ideas and by evoking images of like quality; Cimon's 'trireme', for example, becomes 'the admiral's galley'. He tells his anecdotes, too, with a certain freedom which makes always for simplicity and clearness; the story of the origin of the Minotaur (in the life of Theseus) is a notable example of his clear and orderly method of narration. North thus does a little, much he cannot do, to correct Plutarch's weakness for losing sight of his objective amid a fine, profuse medley of information.

Occasionally, too, North interpolates a comment which shows his acquaintance with the realities of human nature. Thus when Brutus without change of countenance suffers his own sons to be executed before his very eyes, Plutarch says that this was due either to his remarkable virtue or to his overpowering misery, which obscured all other feelings. North adds the remark that this was 'passing the common nature of man, that hath in it both divineness, and



sometimes beastly brutishness'. A sentiment in which Hamlet would have concurred.

But whatever the writer of the *Lives* may have been, his theme is an heroic one and, though not a poet, he had a sufficient sincerity of emotion to pass on something of the greatness which he could not help discerning in the men whose lives he had studied. He may not have really understood them; but at least he tells their story without overloading or obscuring it with rhetoric or false sentiment; and just the added colour of North's style makes the portraits glow with life, while the yet rarer genius of Shakespeare, working on North's prose, makes them stir and breathe and speak.

### § 7.

Many of the qualities of North's style have been illustrated in the passages already cited. He writes clearly and forcibly; he is free in his maturer work from all tendency to preciousness, while preserving a strong feeling for rhythm and the decorative qualities of prose. He uses vernacular words and idioms with very great skill, giving point and freshness to his descriptions and to his dialogue, and constantly keeping in touch

with real life. He can be easy without being slipshod, dignified without being pompous. Here is a typical and straight-forward passage from *The Diall of Princes*:

I have read in the time of King Alexander the great, there was a renowned Pyrate on the Sea, called Dyonides, the which robbed and spoiled al the shipping that hee could get: and by commaundement of this good King Alexander, there was an armie sent foorth to take him. And when he was taken and presented to King Alexander, the King saide unto him, Show me, Dyonides, why dost thou so spoyle on the sea, that no ship can sayle on the sea out of the east into the west for thee? The pyrate aunswered and sayde: 'if I spoyle the sea, why dost thou, Alexander, rob both the sea and land also? O Alexander, because I fight with one shippe in the sea, I am called a thiefe: and because thou robbest with two hundreth ships on the sea, and troublest all the world with 200,000 men, thou art called an Emperour. I sweare unto thee, Alexander, if Fortune were as favourable to me, and the Gods as extreme against thee: they would give mee thine Empyre, and thee my little shippe: and then peradventure I should bee a better king than thou art, and thou become a worse thiefe then I am.'

These were high words, and well receyved of Alexander: and of truth to see if his wordes were correspondent to his promises, he made him of a pyrate a great captaine of an armie. . . .

That is very correctly and precisely worded, but easy and graceful. Very few contemporary writers could have kept even this straightforward piece of narration so evenly modulated and free from involution.



North uses very long sentences at times but he never allows his sense to become obscure or his construction at all tangled. He does not yield purple passages which may be effectively quoted as specimens of his 'style'. He wrote long books and his prose is of a kind that can be read without surfeit in bulk. He varies his tone to suit his subject, keeps his main argument roundly and flowingly phrased, tells his anecdotes with a proper liveliness, never lets his rhythm become mechanical or obtrusive, and uses an excellently wide and varied vocabulary. Consider such chance-picked sentences as these:

If any good quality were lacking in him, he did so finely counterfeit it, that men imagined it was more in him than in those that naturally had it in them in deed. (Solon).

Howbeit he advised her to go her full time, and be brought a-bed in good order, and then he would find means enough to make away with the child that should be born. (Lycurgus.)

How simple is North's language, but how exact and comely!

But Brutus, that was a fast and resolute man, and very fierce in his heart, ran immediately into the market-place, crying out that his fellow consul was a traitor, and contented to grant the tyrants matter and means to make war upon the city, where indeed they deserved not so much as to be relieved in their exile.

It is by such inconspicuous but uniformly sound and skilful writing that North best served the cause of English prose in an age which was already tending both in poetry and in prose to over-emphasis, hyperbole, and 'conceits'.

North's is a prose that has withstood the test of time. Here are three renderings, the product of three centuries, of the same brief passage:

The Translation called DRYDEN'S revised by  
A. H. GLOUGH.

His temperance, as to the pleasures of the body, was apparent in him from his very childhood, as he was with much difficulty incited to them, and always used them with great moderation: though in other things he was extremely eager and vehement, and in his love of glory, and the pursuit of it, he showed a solidity of high spirit and magnanimity far above his age. For he neither sought nor valued it upon every occasion, as his father Philip did (who affected to show his eloquence almost to a degree of pedantry, and took care to have the victories of his racing chariots at the Olympic games engraven on his coin), but when he was asked by some about him, whether he would run a race in the Olympic games, as he was very swift-footed, he answered, he would, if he might have kings to run with him.

#### THE LANGHORNES.

His continence showed itself at an early period for though he was vigorous or rather violent in his other pursuits, he was not easily moved by the



pleasures of the body ; and if he tasted them, it was with great moderation. But there was something superlatively great and sublime in his ambition, far above his years. It was not all sorts of honour that he courted, nor did he seek it in every track, like his father, Philip, who was as proud of his eloquence as any sophist could be, and who had the vanity to record his victories in the Olympic chariot-race in the impression of his coins. Alexander, on the other hand, when asked by some of the people about him, whether he would not run in the Olympic race (for he was swift of foot), answered, "Yes, if I had kings for my antagonists."

#### NORTH.

Even from his childhood they saw that he was given to be chaste. For though otherwise he was very hot and hasty, yet he was hardly moved with lust or pleasure of the body and would moderately use it. The ambition and desire he had of honour shewed a certain greatness of mind and noble courage, passing his years. For he was not (as his Father Philip) desirous of all kind of glory: who, like a rhetorician, had a delight to utter his eloquence, and stamped in his coins the victory at the Olympian games, by the swift running of his horses and coaches. For when he was asked one day (because he was swift of foot) whether he would assay to run for victory at the Olympian games, "I would be content" (said he) "so I might run with Kings".

There is a flabbiness about the Langhorne's prose contrasting strongly with the vigorous purposefulness of North's. 'At an early period', 'superlatively great and sublime'—the Langhorne have no certain knowledge

what 'period', and 'superlatively sublime', mean; but they more or less contain the required sense and they fill out the sentence to a respectable shapeliness. North's is a much more individual use of words. How much more concrete and therefore vivid is 'stamped in his coins the victory at the games' than 'record his victories in the impression of his coins.' North, too, with his 'by the swift running of his horses and coaches' emphasizes, as the Langhornes' 'In the Olympic chariot-race' does not, the contrast between Philip's vicariously earned prizes and Alexander's personal prowess. The Langhornes' 'Yes, if I had kings for my antagonists' is well enough, but how much better is the more simply worded but more memorable phrase 'I could be content so I might run with Kings.'

In his rendering of dialogue North is especially good. A little later in this same life comes the account of the breaking-in of Bucephalus, which Alexander is bold enough to undertake.

'But if thou canst not, no more than they,' replied Philip, 'what wilt thou forfeit for thy folly?' 'I am content,' quoth Alexander, 'to jeopard the price of the horse.'



Thus North, with a distinction of language which is yet utterly simple and almost vernacular. The Langhornes render it :

‘If you should not be able to ride him what forfeiture will you submit to for your rashness’. ‘I will pay the price of the horse.’

Correct enough but lamentably flat. The Clough-Dryden version is worse, making Alexander undertake to pay ‘the whole price of the horse’, as though he had meditated risking a part only, but calculated that the longer odds were justified. The Greek ἀποτίσω τοῦ ἵππου τήν τιμήν does indeed contain in the compound verb the sense of payment in full, but North’s ‘jeopard’ holds as much and more, though perhaps not precisely what is in the Greek.

For a last comparison, set a sentence of North beside one from the latest translation of Plutarch (in the *Loeb Library*). I do not think anyone will need to be told which is which :

However, he did not suffer his democracy to become disordered or confused from an indiscriminate multitude.

Yet, for all that, he suffered not the great multitude that came thither, tag and rag, to be without distinction of degrees and orders.

As a translator there may be a little to say against North: as an artist in prose there is everything to be said for him. He wrote of heroes in an heroic style, and in an age which has itself achieved much heroism he should find understanding readers.



## JOHN LYLY.

### § 1.

JOHN LYLY has suffered a strange trick at the hands of fortune. He was, I have little doubt, a light-hearted, quick-witted, somewhat mercurial person, brilliant but easily turned from his purpose, with a ready perception of the tastes of his public, but no very strong artistic ideals of his own, lighting by chance on beautiful thoughts and gifted with a most delicate ear for harmonies of word or phrase, but with no philosophy of life and no particular interest in his own technique. A featherweight, thistledown kind of man, whose beautiful creations one should enjoy without seeking to explain their mechanism and without taking their author too seriously. Most of the Elizabethan men of letters had in them somewhere a robustness, a physical solidity, which never suggests itself in Lyly's case. One can hardly imagine him settling down as a family physician or playing the retired, newly-made gentleman.

It would be as the support of such men as Lyly that the patron (an institution in any case over-abused) might well be justified. Unfortunately Lyly's two best patrons were Burleigh, who was no pillar of the stage, and Oxford, who early in his client's career lost favour at court. Thus we find this pleasant airy being passing his days in pathetic appeals for material comfort to Burleigh and the Queen till he finally disappears from public view.

Again, Lyly, in the ripeness of his talent, turned from the novel (if *Euphues* can be called one) to the writing of plays, which, though they achieved a narrower fame, touched highwater-mark in their own special kind, and possess a far better title to a permanent place in our literature. Yet *Euphues*, the interest in which is related mainly to literary history, is well known to any reader of our older literature, and any one who has ever sat for examination in that subject shudders at the name, while the plays are too often dismissed, unread, as an influence on Shakespeare's early and less commended plays, and Euphuism, an exaggerated fashion of writing which Lyly as he matured grew



steadily out of, is regarded as the essential quality of his art.

To apply the methods of pedantry to the work of such a man seems almost desecration, yet the pedants have mauled scarcely any poet more in proportion to the appreciative or sympathetic criticism he has received. Even the graceful and discriminating work of the admirable French critic M. Feuillerat is embodied in a monograph weighing no less than three and three quarter pounds!

## § 2.

The date of Lyly's birth is not exactly known, but in the matriculation list of Magdalen College, Oxford, dated October 8, 1571, he is described as being 17 years of age. I do not know that this depends on any thing better than Lyly's own assertion, but there is no reason for doubting it, so that his birth may be placed somewhere within the twelve months ending October 8, 1554.

The place of his birth and breeding and even of his parentage were for a long time equally unknown, but the researches of M. Feuillerat at length established these in a very interesting manner. His grandfather was no less a person than William Lyly (or

Lilly) the grammarian, his father one Peter Lyly, a prebendary and later registrar of Canterbury. His mother was a Burgh, of a well-connected Yorkshire family.

Where he was at school, or whether he went to school at all, is again unknown. The first definitive statement regarding him in the older biographies is that of Anthony Wood, who says that

"John Lylie, or Lylly, a Kentish man born, became a student in Magd. coll, in the beginning of 1569, aged 16, or thereabouts, and was afterwards, as I conceive, either one of the demies or clerks of that house; but always averse to the crabbed studies of logic and philosophy. For so it was that his genius being naturally bent to the pleasant paths of poetry (as if Apollo had given him a wreath of his own bays, without snatching or struggling), did in manner neglect academical studies, yet not so much but that he took the degrees in arts, that of master being compleated 1575."

The University Register shows that Lyly matriculated in 1571, took his Bachelor's degree in 1573, and his Master's in 1575. In 1579 he was incorporated M. A. in the University of Cambridge, but there is no reason for supposing he ever resided there.

In 1574 Lyly, in spite of his neglected studies, thought he had a claim to be a fellow of Magdalen. The fellows would have none of him, so Lyly appealed to Burleigh, whom he



calls his '*patronus colendissimus*', to obtain a royal mandate for his admission to their society. The Latin in which this charming piece of impertinence is written is none of the best, and Lyly can adduce no stronger reason why Burleigh should thus foist him on his unwilling college than that he badly needs the place and has no other hope of getting it. Burleigh did not accede to his request.

We next hear of him lodging in the Savoy, by the favour of William Absolon, a fellow Cantuarian, cultivating, perhaps with some success, the patronage of his powerful neighbour, Lord Burleigh. Meanwhile he sought to make his reputation with a book, and in 1578 there appeared *The Anatomy of Wit*, the first part of what is commonly known as *Euphues*. It achieved immediate popularity, four editions being printed within fifteen months, and Lyly was prompt to press his success with a sequel, *Euphues and his England*, published in 1580. Its vogue was even greater than its predecessor's. Fifty years later Blount, the editor of Lyly's collected comedies, wrote:

"Our nation are in his debt for a new English which he taught them. *Euphues and his England* began first that language: All our ladies were then his Scholars, and that Beautie in Court which could

not Parley Euphueisme, was as little regarded, as shee which now there speakes not French."

To Blount writing so long after the event this may have appeared so. In reality Euphuism, like French, was not a new language, though it might be one only newly learnt by the Ladies of the Court. Nor was the matter of *Euphues* any more novel. In all respects *Euphues*, meaning thereby the two books just mentioned, represents the culmination of a literary mode. It rode to success on the top of a flood tide. Lyly's ideals of culture and education would not have startled his own grandfather, and the book is akin to many others of Tudor times—to the two versions of Guevara, Berners' *Golden Booke* and North's *Diall of Princes*, to Ascham's *Schoolmaster*, Elyot's *Governour*, Hoby's *Courtier* (after Castiglione) and others; not at all points resembling any of them, but giving a hint now of one, now of another, and stringing the whole on a thread of romance, thus catering for all classes of readers, providing serious and edifying thoughts for Burleigh, wit and elegant discourse for his son-in-law Oxford, sentiment and sugared speech for the ladies. The book is to us of immense value, and yet of less, intrinsically, than the text



books would lead us to suppose. If *Euphues* were totally lost, literature would not have suffered over-much, and we could learn elsewhere all that it has to tell us of the spirit of the age and of the art of prose-writing in the middle of Elizabeth's reign, but we could not learn it so compendiously or so pleasantly.

### § 3.

Lyly seems to have been under no delusions as to the permanence of this kind of art. After *Euphues and his England* he never, so far as we know, attempted another book of the same sort, nor any sort of romance. The tide, he must have realized, was on the turn even while the rapidly issued editions of his second book were still being put upon the market. He did not trust to maintaining himself by such labours, but turned to another form of literature, and at the same time looked for support apart from the earnings of his pen. This may not have been really due to his wisdom, but rather to the fickleness of his fancy; two books of a kind may have exhausted his energies in that direction. If so he succeeded better than he deserved, for he cer-

tainly found the form which best suited his genius and truly earned with his comedies the fame which has come to him, a little dubiously, from his romance.

*Euphues and his England* was dedicated to Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, who had married Ann Cecil; a brilliant but frivolous nobleman, in whom M. Feuillerat sees 'the purest type of the Italianate Englishman of the age, the true *'Speculum Tuscanismi'*. Lyly was now serving him in some capacity, perhaps as secretary, perhaps merely as one of his 'gentlemen', and he was not only hereditary Grand Chamberlain and so ultimately responsible for dramatic performances at court, but also a play-writer and maintainer of a company of players. Here then was a natural avenue for Lyly to approach fame and fortune. He turned playwright and sought also permanent employment of some sort in this connection.

His comedies fared well enough, though in the nature of things they could not earn the wide renown of his romances, even in print. But the second of them had hardly been performed when Oxford, by a quarrel with the Howards and their partisans, incurred the Queen's displeasure, and Lyly himself, by ap-



pearing to sympathize with Lady Oxford in a particularly bitter quarrel between her and her husband, came under a further domestic cloud. In 1583 he married Beatrice Browne, a bride of very good Yorkshire stock.

In 1584 he resumed operations in the drama with *Gallathea*, but for some reason, probably the dissolution or the suppression of those 'little eyasses' the Children of Paul's, who were his accustomed actors, the piece was not at this time produced but published unacted. His plays were not of a type which the adult companies were well fitted to produce and they never seem to have attempted them. In this year, however, Oxford generously bestowed on him an endowment worth, in our money, some £200. a year (£30-13-4), which he compounded three years later for £250. in cash; an improvident proceeding, doubtless, but not so bad a bargain as might have been feared.

The following year saw the Paul's boys reconstituted, and three more comedies were written and acted, and *Gallathea* acted as well, before the final suppression of Lyly's young players in 1591. With this event his career as a writer of comedies comes to an end. The company was indeed revived in

1599, and the Children of the Chapel also acted at least one of Lyly's pieces; but his only return to the stage was with a piece in which he experimented with the now fashionable blank verse, *The Woman in the Moone*, published, after production at court nobody knows when, in 1595. But even before the end Lyly was growing weary of his new craft; for his penultimate play, *Mother Bombie*, was a piece of a decidedly different type from its predecessors. One other play, written in rhymed verse and sometimes ascribed to Lyly, *The Maid's Metamorphosis*, belongs to the turn of the century, but it is almost certainly not his.

Lyly's writings were not such as were likely to earn him much money, nor for the matter of that were those of any play-wright of the age; and the cessation of his dramatic productions may not have affected his income very much. But that seems never to have been sufficient for his needs, which were not, we may assume, of the most modest kind. He continued to the end of his life to be a courtier and for several sessions, from 1588 to 1601, sat in Parliament. He was continually appealing to the Cecils or to the Queen for some kind of post in the Revels office, but there is



no precise evidence that he ever obtained anything at all, certainly not that Mastership of which he had as he thought been promised the reversion. He is indeed described in a genealogical table printed by M. Feuillerat as 'Esq. to the body to Q. Elizabeth', but there would be little solid satisfaction in the enjoyment of that honour. In his second petition to the Queen there is a punning and rather obscure allusion to 'Tents and Toyles', which Mr. Bond has interpreted to mean that Lyly had been employed as Clerk-controller of the Tents and Toils—a branch of the Revels Office, but in the face of his subsequent lament, 'Thirteen years your Highness servant: but yet nothinge. . . A thousand hopes, but all nothinge. a hundred promises, but yet nothinge', it is difficult to accept this. So he went on hoping (he had always ten times more hopes than even promises), till the time came for him to receive vij yards of black cloth and his servants iiij yards, to make mourning suits for the funeral of his royal mistress. Anthony Wood knew nothing of him after the year 1597. In point of fact he did not die till 1606, and then he was only 52. But his work was done and his fame achieved by the time he was 36.

Meanwhile Lyly had tried yet one other species of literature—controversial pamphlet-eering.

In 1588 some Puritan, under the name of Martin Marprelate, had attacked Archbishop Whitgift, Aylmer, Bishop of London, and Cooper, Bishop of Winchester, in the most violent and scurrilous pamphlets. After vain endeavours to suppress these slanderous publications, the bishops resolved to fight their opponent with his own weapons and hired some of the most noted wits of the day, notably Lyly and Nash, as Church propagandists.

I have no intention of here discussing the Marprelate pamphlets, or Lyly's share in them. Witty though they are, they are of no artistic value, and they throw little or no light on Lyly's more literary writings or on his real opinions. Suffice it therefore to record that he was, on the evidence of his quondam friend and present enemy, Gabriel Harvey, the author of *Pappe with an hatchet, Alias, a Figge for mie God sonne, Or cracke me this nut. Or a country cuffe, that is a sound boxe of the eare, for the idiot Martin to hold his peace, seeing the patch will take no warning. Written by one that dares call a*



*dog, a dog and made to prevent Martins god daies.* (1589). He may have written the slightly earlier *A Whippe for an Ape: or Martin displaied*, and others of the series have been attributed to him. But I grudge these *ephemeria* energies that might have been devoted to the writing of more *Court Comedies*.

## § 4.

It is the manner of his writing, not his powers of construction, still less of characterization, that bestows greatness on Lyly's dramatic pieces.

No such beautiful prose as his is to be found in Elizabethan literature, and this I maintain without any very great admiration for those qualities which are usually understood by the name Euphuism. From this epidemic disease, for such it was, Lyly indeed at one time suffered, as more or less had all Europe. Ascham, writing seven or eight years before the publication of *The Anatomy of Wit*, denounced Italianate conceits:

"It is a world to see how Englishmen desire to hear finer speech than this language will allow, to eat finer bread than is made of wheat or wear finer cloth than is made of wool. . . ."

Marini was the most famous Italian Euphuist, but most writers there had a touch of the complaint. In Spain it has been traced, half a century earlier, to Guevara. In France it mars the poetry of the *Pléiade*.

The disease is little more than excessive devotion to the artifices of style, blended with the remains of the mediaeval love of allegory, which here appears as a too frequent and purposeless use of simile. But, had it not been carried to excess, this tendency was by no means to be regretted. English prose had long been left to wind along in monstrous and unwieldy coils; if some of Ascham's contemporaries went too far they were merely the extreme left of a band of well-intentioned and deserving reformers. In Lyly's hands prose acquires some of the qualities already sought for in good poetry, qualities which should be common to all speech, and not to verse alone—neatness of phraseology, antithesis and rhythm. Besides this structural reform, he elevates the language of dramatic prose from slang to a refined diction and adds, in accordance with the taste of the age, ornament. It is the ornament on which critics have usually fixed as his characteristic, and everyone knows of what kind it is. Similes are his fa-



vourite form; borrowed for the most part from real or fabulous natural history and used often three or four at a time. But in the plays these are not nearly so common as the novels and they grow steadily fewer as time goes on. The tropes, similes and antitheses sink (according to Mr. Child's reckoning) from two and a half to the page in *Campaspe* to little more than one to two pages in *Mydas* and *Mother Bombie*. Moreover these similes are often both apt and witty; as this one in *Euphues and his England*:

“if the envious shall clap lead to my heels to make me sinke, yet if your lordship with your little finger do but hold me up by the chinne, I shall swim and be so far from being drowned.”

Humour he has, too, a commodity not over common hitherto in English prose. But his chief characteristic, apart from his technicalities of style, is his analysis of passion. Love is his favourite *motif*, and of this and of the art of flirtation he gives us a careful study. Of women he shews intimate knowledge and we can well believe that he was ever a favourite with the court ladies. To them he makes direct appeal in several of his prefaces and epilogues, and continually, by flattery, in his plays.

The order of the plays is a matter of conjecture, but the whole period which they cover is short, and in their structure and dramatic qualities there is very little growth to be traced. The dates of publication are indeed known, but it is certain that publication did not always closely follow production; nor production, composition. The following is a list of the plays, in the order in which they were probably written, with the date of first publication :

Campaspe . . . . .	1584	also in Blount's <i>Six Court Comedies</i> , 1632.
Sapho and Phao . . . . .	1584	"
Gallathea . . . . .	1592	"
Endimion . . . . .	1591	"
Mydas . . . . .	1592	"
Mother Bombie . . . . .	1594	"
The Woman in the Moone . . . . .	1597	
Love's Metamorphosis	1601	

All the above have been reprinted by Fairholt, and, more recently and more correctly, by Bond. Dodsley included *Campaspe*, and Dilke *Endimion*, *Mydas* and *Mother Bombie*, in their *Old Plays*.

### § 5.

*Campaspe* was produced by the Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars and at Court some-



time about New Year, 1581, and was never bettered by any of the succeeding plays. It is based on an historical anecdote, not like the rest on a myth, and has perhaps more human interest than any of them. The love story of Campaspe and Apelles the Painter, with Alexander's conflicting desires for love and for glory, is well set forth and is itself dramatic. In addition, the play has Lyly's usual grace of diction and ingenuity of thought. The dialogue is, as always, lively and clever and in this case aptly enough put into the mouths of professional quibblers, Aristotle, Diogenes and other philosophers, and of their servants, who chop logic in amusing burlesque of their masters.

The style of Lyly is here at its richest ; antithesis and a kind of cumulative rhetoric are used with great effect, and the piece is full of neat though not very profound epigrammatic sentences, such as these :

It were a shame Alexander should desire to command the world if he could not command himself.

Fortune, thou did'st never yet deceive virtue because virtue never yet did trust fortune.

Always in absolute beauty there is something above art.

A longer passage will illustrate that cumulative, heightening effect I have spoken of :

*Alexander.* I love, Hephaestion, I love. I love Campaspe, a thing farre unfit for a Macedonian, for a king, for Alexander!

*Hephaestion.* I cannot tell, Alexander, whether the report be more shameful to be heard or the cause sorrowful to be believed. What, is the son of Philip, king of Macedon, become the subject of Campaspe the captive of Thebes? Is that minde whose greatness the world could not containe drawn within the compasse of an idle alluring eie? Is the warlike sound of drum and trump turned to the soft noise of lyre and lute? the neighing of barbed steeds whose lowdnes filled the aire with terror and whose breathes dimmed the sun with smoake, converted to delicate tunes and amorous glances ——— You love, ah grief, but whom? Campaspe, ah shame, a maid forsooth unknowne.

(*Campaspe*, II, ii.)

Two of the best lyrics in the plays occur in this one:

Cupid and my Campaspe played  
At cards for kisses.

and

What bird so sings yet so does wail?

But though these songs, which have been reprinted in countless anthologies, have always been ascribed to Lyly, the best modern scholars have, alas, decided that he cannot certainly be affirmed the author of any of the lyrics in the later texts of the plays; of which, none the less, they remain



among the chief ornaments; and we owe a debt of gratitude to Blount for inserting them in the text of the *Six Court Comedies*.

*Sapho and Phao*, a play I take less pleasure in, is based on a pseudo-classical myth. Phao, the ferryman of Syracuse, has taken Venus and Cupid over in his boat and Venus, seeking to put down the beautiful Sapho, has been hoist with her own petard and made amorous of Phao. The ladies and gallants of Sapho's court have much witty repartee, always an excellent feature in Lyly. Sapho, in love, like Venus, with the now irresistible Phao, would rather die than confess her love, and Lyly exercises his ingenuity in making her vent her passion in words, but ambiguously, so that Phao shall not see it. Venus, to rid herself of Sapho's rivalry, has occasion to visit her ill-used husband Vulcan, maker of Cupid's bolts. She coaxes him very prettily and he, though he knows her for a humbug, does her will, while he and his Cyclopes sing a song less highly esteemed than some, yet not lacking the touch of the true lyrist:

My shag-haire Cyclops, come lets ply  
Our Lemnian hammers lustily;  
By my wifes sparrows  
I sweare these arrows

Shall swinging fly  
Through many a wantons eye.  
These headed are with golden blisses,  
These silver ones feathered with kisses.  
But this of lead  
Strikes a clown dead.

*Gallathea* was entered at Stationers' Hall in 1585 and written, topical allusions would suggest, a year earlier, and played by the Children of Paul's before the Queen's Majesty on New Year's Day, 1587/8. It is perhaps a revised version that was printed in 1592 and now alone survives. Here again Lyly used classical costume and a classical myth, but the setting of the scene is Lincolnshire, and Poseidon's monster, to whom sacrifice of the fairest maiden in the countryside must be made, is the bore, or Agar, of Jean Inge-low's *High Tide on the Coast of Lincolnshire*. To protect them from this horrid fate, two maidens are disguised as boys by their fathers, and, meeting in the woods in this disguise, fall in love with one another. With this is joined the story of Cupid's adventures among Diana's nymphs, whom he inspires with love for supposed boys, and also the adventures of three brother vagrants who try various trades. Finally, Diana induces Poseidon to forego his right and one of the



two girls is made to change her sex that they may marry and live happily ever after.

The play has the usual Lylyan qualities of witty dialogue and touches of charming fancy and happy characterization. The sort of point which Lyly makes so neatly seems trite to us, but was fresher then and even now would find new life on the lips of a well-graced actor. Thus Hæbe, in default of Galathea and Phillida, is offered as the belle of the village to Poseidon. Loud are her lamentations, till the God rejects her as not pretty enough, when she begins to desire beauty with death rather than to be alive but scorned.

Here is a specimen of Lyly's dialogue, empty, perhaps, but sparkling and rapid as a shuttle: Cupid has been captured by the outraged nymphs:

*Telusa.* Come, sirra, to your task. First you must undo all these lovers' knots, because you tied them.

*Cupid.* If they be true love knots, 't is impossible to unknit them; if false, I never tied them.

*Eurota.* Make no excuse, but to it.

*Cupid.* Love-knots are tied with eyes, and cannot be undone with hands; made fast with thoughts, and cannot be unloosed with fingers. Had Diana no task to set Cupid but things impossible? I will to it.

*Ramia.* Why how now? You tie the knots faster.

*Cupid.* I cannot choose, it goeth against my mind to make them loose.

*Eurota.* Let me see—now, 'tis impossible to be undone.

*Cupid.* It is the true love-knot of a woman's heart, therefore cannot be undone.

*Ramia.* That falls in sunder of itself.

*Cupid.* It was made of a man's thought, which will never hang together.

*Larissa.* You have undone that well.

*Cupid.* Aye, because it was never tied well.

*Telusa.* To the rest, for she will give you no rest. These two knots are finely untied.

*Cupid.* It was because I never tied them; the one was knit by Pluto, not Cupid; by money, not love; the other by force, not faith; by appointment, not affection.

*Telusa.* Why do you lay that knot aside?

*Cupid.* For death.

*Telusa.* Why?

*Cupid.* Because the knot was knit by faith and must only be unknit by death.

*Eurota.* Why laugh you?

*Cupid.* Because it is the fairest and the falsest; done with greatest art, and least truth; with best colours, and worst conceits.

*Telusa.* Who tied it?

*Cupid.* A man's tongue.

and so on, in the best light comedy (today it would be musical comedy) vein; largely irrelevant and superficial, but gay, pointed and brisk.

*Endimion*, produced at Court in 1586 and printed in 1591, is one of the best of the series, though burdened with a heavy load of political allegory. Its sub-title



is *The Man in the Moone*, and it sets forth how Cynthia, the unattainable, is beloved of Endimion ; but Tellus, who herself loves him, employs the witch Dipsas to cast him into a long sleep. Cynthia thereupon imprisons Tellus, who tempts her gaoler, Corsites, and induces him to try to move Endimion from the bank of lunary where he lies sleeping. Corsites, in this anticipating the Fat Knight, is pinched by the Fairies whose revels he disturbs :

Pinch him, pinch him, black and blue,  
Saucy mortals must not view  
What the Queen of Stars is doing,  
Nor pry into our fairy wooing.

At last Eumenides, Endimion's faithful friend, obtains the privilege of having a 'remedie' for any one thing. He doubts whether to choose to have his love for Semele satisfied, or his friend awaked, but decides on the more generous choice. By his instructions Cynthia then kisses Endimion, who awakes, has his youth restored to him, and devotes his life to the contemplation of Cynthia's beauty. Semele, 'the very wasp of all women' (an ancestress of Benedick's Beatrice) grants her hand to the loyal Eumenides.

In all this it is impossible not to suspect an allegory, and the commentators have fur-

nished us with a jangling bunch of the most elaborate keys, which cannot however be profitably considered without a minute knowledge of the court history of the time. Cynthia is of course the Queen; Endimion is either Leicester or James of Scotland, and Tellus either Lady Sheffield or Mary Queen of Scots. M. Feuillerat points out that in 1582/3 a marriage between Elizabeth and James was being spoken of, to which Mary, then a prisoner, would naturally be bitterly opposed. Dipsas used commonly to be identified with the Countess of Shrewsbury, but M. Feuillerat would explain her as the Church of Rome. At any rate, she is the instigator, on Mary's behalf, of attempts to embarrass James. From these Elizabeth at last frees him, recognizing him as her heir and bestowing on him the light of her countenance. Eumenides, in this scheme, is the Master of Gray; the earlier commentators favoured Lord Sussex or Sir Philip Sidney.

The minor characters depend, of course, on the major ones and no one presumes to identify them all. The whole matter is probably incapable of certain settlement and it is to be regretted that interest in this puzzle has tended to the neglect of the real beauties



of the play, which were long ago singled out for eulogy by Hazlitt. Lyly's beautiful speech is here seen at its best, and I cannot withhold some characteristic sentences, together with another specimen of Lyly's dialogue:

Vaine Eumenides—follow thou thine own fortunes which creepe on the earth and suffer me to flie to mine whose fall though it be desperate, yet shall it come by daring. (*Endimion* I. i.)

Semele, whose golden locks seem most curious when they seeme most careless. (II. i.)

The love of men to women is a thing common and of course: the friendship of man to man is infinite and immortal. (III. iv.)

Do not that wrong to the settled friendship of a man as to compare it with the light affection of a woman. (V. ii.)

My palace is paved with grasse and tiled with stars. (IV. ii.)

Being old before thou rememberest thou wast young. (IV. iii.)

*Tellus.* But in sooth, *Endimion*, without more ceremonies, is it not *Cynthia*?

*Endimion.* You know, *Tellus*, that of the Gods we are forbidden to dispute because theyre deities come not within compasse of our reasons; and of *Cynthia* we are allowed not to talke but to wonder, because her vertues are not within reach of our capacities.

*Tellus.* Why, she is but a woman.

*Endimion.* No more was *Venus*.

*Tellus.* She is but a virgin.

*Endimion.* No more was *Vesta*.

*Tellus.* She shall have an end.

*Endimion.* So shall the world.

*Tellus.* Is not her beauty subject to time?

*Endimion.* No more than time is to standing still.

*Tellus.* Wilt thou make her immortal?

*Endimion.* No, but incomparable.

*Tellus.* Take heed, Endimion, lest like the wrestler in Olimpia that striving to lift an impossible weight catcht an incurable straine, thou by fixing thy thoughts above thy reach, fall into a disease without al recure! But I see thou art now in love with Cynthia.

*Endimion.* No. Tellus; thou knowest that statelie Cedar whose top reacheth unto the clowdes, never boweth his head to the shrubs that grow in the valley; nor Ivie that climeth up by the Elme, can ever get hold of the beames of the sunne: Cynthia I honour in all humilitie, whom none ought, or dare adventure to love, whose affections are immortall and vertues infinite. Suffer me therefore to gaze on the moone, at whom were it not for thy selfe, I would die with wondering.

One can imagine the Queen listening complacently to her poet's latest turn of flattery; with, perchance, some other lady of the court secretly taking to her own heart the honeyed words.

A further source of interest lies in the subplot, most loosely worked in, in which we are introduced to one of the best and earliest of Elizabethan *Milites Gloriosi*, Sir Tophas, whose relationship to Armado, and even to Sir John Falstaff, leaps to the eye. It is emphasized by the presence of the saucy page Epiton, Armado's Moth (a name which



occurs elsewhere in Lyly, in *Mydas*). Sir Tophas talks a burlesque Euphuism, which shows how little Lyly regarded his own early mannerisms.

*Mydas*, acted probably on 6 January, 1588/9 and printed in 1592, is another excellent play. It also conceals an allegory. Mydas, whose story in the Greek myth is too well known to need repeating, is Philip of Spain. His ambition is to conquer Lesbos (England), but he fails. The power of turning all he touches to gold symbolizes the influx of wealth from the Indies, which proves a curse rather than a blessing. One critic has gone so far as to say that Pan and Apollo, between whom poor Mydas stood arbiter, are the Roman and the Reformed Churches, but this is unconvincing. Martius, the blood-thirsty general, may be Alva, but the detailed application of the allegory, as in *Endimion*, is difficult and here an even less profitable task.

Particularly puzzling, from a different point of view, is the singing contest between Pan and Apollo. At the risk of sharing the King's fate and acquiring ass's ears I must confess to a preference for Pan's song, and the fact that Mydas recants his decision and afterwards extols Apollo shows nothing of

Lyly's real opinion on the matter, but only that he did not conceive of Mydas as prepared to suffer for his artistic convictions. That Pan's song is better than Apollo's would matter little, for the authenticity of the lyrics is now denied, if we could be sure that Lyly meant Apollo's to appear the better. But not only have we here the songs in dispute, but the exact reasons for Mydas' judgment and they are to the modern critic thoroughly sound. It is thus that Pan voices his theory of poetry:

*Pan.* Apollo, I told thee before that Pan was a God. I tell thee now againe, as great a god as Apollo. I had almost said a greater: and because thou shalt know I care not to tell my thought I say a greater. Pan feels the passions of love deeply engraven in his heart, with as faire nymphs, with as great fortune as Apollo, as Neptune, as Jove and better than Pan can none describe love. . . . . Be thou sunne still, Apollo, the shadow is fast at thy heeles. . . . . I as neare to thy love as thou to mine. A carter with his whistle and his whip in true eare, moves as much as Phoebus with his fierie chariot and winged horses. . . . .

Believe, me, Apollo, our groves are pleasanter than your heavens, our milkmaidcs than your goddesses, our rude ditties to a pipe than your sonnets to a lute. Here is flat faith, amo, amas, where you cry, O utinam amarent vel non amarem. . . . .

*Mydas.* Meethinks there's more sweetness in the pipe of Pan than Apollo's lute; I brooke not



that nice tinkling of strings, that contents mee that makes one start. What a shrillnesse came into mine eares out of that pipe and what a goodly noise it made! Apollo, I must neede judge that Pan deserveth most praise.

*Pan.* Blessed be Mydas, worthy to be a god; these girls whose eares doe but itch with daintiness, give the verdict without weighing the vertue: they have beene brought up in chambers with soft musick, not where I make the woods ring with my pipe, Mydas.

This is a most admirable protest against the artificial style of poetry; and though it involves Mydas in ridicule and disaster, it is impossible to believe that it is not a sincere personal utterance on the part of the author. Did Lyly, I wonder, really in his heart prefer the natural style, but being essentially a court poet, not dare say as much outright, so that he hedged and passed off his own criticism as the produce of Mydas' crass brain, to see, perhaps, how it would be received? These are the two lyrics in question. They first appear in Blount's *Six Court Comedies*:

APOLLO'S SONG.

My Daphne's hair is twisted gold,  
 Bright stars a-piece her eyes do hold,  
 My Daphne's brow enthrones the graces,  
 My Daphne's beauty stains all faces,  
 On Daphne's cheek grow rose and cherry,  
 On Daphne's lip a sweeter berry,  
 Daphne's snowy hand but touched does melt,  
 And then no heavenlier warmth is felt,

My Daphne's voice tunes all the spheres,  
 My Daphne's music charms all ears.  
 Fond I am thus to sing her praise;  
 These glories now are turned to bays.

PAN'S SONG.

Pan's Syrinx was a god indeed,  
 Though now she's turned into a reed  
 From that dear reed Pan's pipe does come,  
 A pipe that strikes Apollo dumb;  
 Nor flute nor lute nor gittern can  
 So chant it as the pipe of Pan;  
 Cross-gartered swains, and dairy girls,  
 With faces smug, and round as pearls,  
 When Pan's shrill pipe begins to play,  
 With dancing wear out night and day;  
 The bag-pipe's drone his hum lays by,  
 When Pan sounds up his minstrelsy,  
 His minstrelsy! O base! This quill  
 Which at my mouth with wind I fill,  
 Puts me in mind though her I miss,  
 That still my Syrinx lips I kiss.

Lyly's plays are continually giving us the germs of lyrics. Few of the themes of the Elizabethan song books are not to be found propounded in Lyly's prose. Here is one in *Mydas* :

You be all young and fair, endeavour all to be wise and virtuous that when like roses you shall fall from the stalk you may be gathered and put to the still. (*Mydas*, II. ii.)

The next play is *Mother Bombie*, acted in 1590 and printed in 1594. It is of a different kind from any of the others, a comedy of intrigue of the classical type. Four fathers,



one of them of the 'long-lost' variety, and a foster nurse possess between them three sons and three daughters. Their parents desire to pair them off one way, their own wish is to pair off another way. By the aid of four boys (the counterparts of the Terentian slaves) the fathers are deluded and ultimately appeased. The plot is cunningly devised and neatly rounded off, but the characters are unreal and there is none of the poetry and wit of the other plays. The play was probably an experiment, and Lyly did not think well enough of it to persevere on these lines. The wittiest touch is when Halfpenny, one of the 'boys', on the discovery of his very clever plot to bamboozle his master is charged with it. 'And you, you oatmeal groat, you were acquainted with this plot?' To which the oatmeal groat modestly replies, 'Accessory, as it were'.

*The Woman in the Moone* is another experiment, this time in verse. On the strength of the prologue, which describes the play as 'a Poet's dream, the first he had in Phoebus' holy bower', it has been said to be his first play; but even if we suppose it to have been written only a short time before its entry at Stationers' Hall in 1595, it might yet be so

described as being the first written in verse and so under the traditional care of Phoebus. The verse is neat and smooth, mainly of the end-stopped type, but there is a good deal of variety in the rhythm, so much, indeed, as to be very remarkable in a play of the '70s, which this one would have to be if it really were earlier than *Campaspe*. For the rest the play is a poor one,\* lacking the usual play of wit and having no court scenes and no women except Pandora, who is by turns under the influence of one of the seven planets and therefore for six-sevenths of the play very unloveable. A few lines will serve to shew what manner of blank verse Lyly wrote:

Now rule Pandora, in fayre Cynthia's steade  
 And ranke the moone inconstant like thyself.  
 Raigne thou at women's nuptials and their birth,  
 Let them be mutable in all their loves,  
 Fantasticall, childish, and folish in their desires.

(*W. in the M.*, V. i.)

Last of all, we come to *Loves Metamorphosis*, 'A wittie and courtly pastorall, written by Mr. John Lyllie. First played by the children of Paules, and now by the child-

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\* J. A. Symonds would like to doubt the authenticity of this play, but it was published during Lyly's lifetime under his name. Blount did not reprint it, but it is not a 'Court Comedy'.



ren of the Chappell. London: Printed by William Wood, dwelling by the West end of Paules, at the signe of Time, 1601'.

The date of its composition has greatly puzzled the literary historians. It is known to have been acted in 1600 by the Children of the Chapel, but when the Children of Paules acted it is not known. Their operations were suspended from before October, 1591, to 1600, so that it would seem probable that it was written and acted before 1591. Mr. Bond thinks it was altered before being revived by the Children of the Chapel, but there is nothing to indicate this with certainty. It is nearly akin to *Gallathea*, to the action of which there are apparent allusions, but it seems to lack something of the vivacity and wit of the earlier plays. Ceres' nymphs scorn their forester lovers so utterly that they will scarcely condescend even to exchange repartee with them. Instead of repulsing them with their tongues, they take to their heels; with much credit, perhaps, to their virtue, but to the play's infinite loss.

M. Feuillerat, arguing from a reference by Ben Jonson in the Introduction to *Cynthia's Revels*, acted in 1600, to 'the *umbræ* or ghosts of some three or four plays departed

a dozen years since . . . . seen walking on your stage here', puts the first performance of the play back to 1588 or thereabouts. This seems a probable suggestion, and the plain inferiority of the play might well account for Lyly's neglect to publish it earlier and also for his abandonment of the theatre, wherein, too, other names were now coming to eclipse his.

### § 6.

Chief among them, of course, is the great name of Shakespeare. The instances of resemblance between passages in Shakespeare and in Lyly are so many as to make a debt owing by one to the other indisputable, and besides these special borrowings there are certain qualities and types of character which originate with Lyly. Shakespeare's early plays abound in Euphuism, which, whether or no it derived any peculiar qualities from Lyly's wit, was certainly first introduced by him to the stage. Ladies-in-waiting, courtiers, pert pages and nymphs are Lyly's usual speakers, and he delights in situations where *double entente* may be employed, such as that provided by the two girls disguised as boys in *Gallathea*. *Love's*



*Labour's Lost*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* remind us in many ways of Lyly; and though in their humanity and even in their construction they are on a different plane from Lyly's, in sheer verbal wit and that unreal brilliance which is associated, to use a more modern instance, with characters of the Cherubino type, characters portrayable piquantly and effectively by boy actors, in these Shakespeare never surpassed his predecessor. And in this respect Lyly is unique: nowhere else did Shakespeare fail to outstrip his teachers.

There is no genuine dramatic force in Lyly's plays, for of action there is little or none and the characters only in flashes display individuality. But the wit, the verbal felicity, the analysis of emotion and the satirical comment on humanity, though set forth rather by precept than example, are inimitable and the whole conception of the plays is beautifully uniform—setting, characters and dialogue, a plot blended of allegory and love-intrigue, a diction blended of metaphor and lyric warmth.

Of his prose style abundant examples have been quoted. His is a figured, coloured style, but not, at its best, garish or over-elaborat-

ed. Even in *Campaspe*, the earliest of the series, there is no empty, mechanical quality about it, such as the parodists of Euphuism affect. It is a modulated, carefully phrased speech; aiming at beauty, where beauty is its theme, at pointedness and emphasis harmonizing with the speaker's character. Lyly was no Grub Street hack, writing of a courtly world which he knew only as a gazer from afar. He was a gentleman of the bed-chamber, the darling of the court ladies. His pert pages, his arch maidens, his finely-spoken gentlemen, all are copied from the life, though only so far as their words and outward manners go. Of their true characters and motives we get few glimpses. But Lyly's dialogue is, we may feel sure, the sublimation of court parleying—neater, brighter, more delicate than the real thing.

Concerning the mechanical properties and rhetorical devices of his style more than enough has been printed: the reader who cares for such dissection may pleasurably do it for himself. Instead, I present one more passage, from a part of Lyly's dramatic work not as yet touched on, those prologues and epilogues, mellifluous but necessarily formal and a little stilted, of which every play has



one or more. Here is the Epilogue to *Endimion*:

A man walking abroad, the wind and sun strove for sovereignty, the one with his blast, the other with his beames. The wind blew hard, the man wrapped his garment about him harder. It blustered more strongly, he then girt it fast to him: I cannot prevail said the wind. The sun casting her crystal beams, began to warm the man: he unloosed his gowne: yet it shined brighter: he then put it off. I yield, said the wind, for if thou continue shining, he will also put off his coat.

Dread Sovereign, the malicious that seek to overthrow us with threats, do but stiffen our thoughts, and make them sturdier in storms: but if your Highness vouchsafe with your favourable beams to glance upon us, we shall not only stoop, but with all humility lay both our hands and hearts, at your Majesties' feet.

In his own sphere Lyly is master: no other poet has given us anything of quite the same charm. All the other forms of early drama, the tragedy of blood, the chronicle play, the low farce, were improved upon in their own kind by Shakespeare and the later dramatists. Lyly's court comedy springs into existence ready armed with quip and crack, shepherd's crook and powderpuff. To *Campaspe*, *Endimion* and *Mydas* must belong the praise of being the best of their kind, and that a singularly beautiful one.





## LANCELOT ANDREWES.

### § 1.

**I**N THAT same Cathedral Church of St. Saviour's, Southwark, where lies the poet Gower is the tomb of Lancelot Andrewes. It stands in the south ambulatory, and has been newly restored and coloured. Of very pleasing appearance was Andrewes, if this image is to be believed, his features cleanly made but not very large, trim moustache, small beard—a handsome man, refined and well-kept. Beside the tomb is hung a notice beginning thus:

#### READER.\*

If thou art a Christian stay, it will be worth thy tarrying to know how great a man lies here; an incomparable bulwark of the Church of Christ, by his conversation, writings, prayers and examples.

There is no danger of the name of Lancelot Andrewes being forgotten. His *Preces Privata-*

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\* This is a translation of the Latin epitaph by Bishop Wren.

*tae* have taken rank as one of the devotional classics of Christianity, and he is regarded as a notable specimen of the learned, moderate Anglican divine of the pre-Laudian age. But to his own generation the *Preces* were unknown, and of Anglican bishops they had not yet a long enough line fully to appreciate his merits. To them he was *Stella Praedicatorum*, 'The Planet of Preachers', and by virtue of his *XCVI Sermons* he still deserves an honourable mention among the masters of our language.

## § 2.

Lancelot Andrewes was not of such stock as usually yields Anglican bishops. For he came from London's sailor-town, being born (in 1555, the year of the burning of the Oxford martyrs) in Thames Street, Barking, 'of honest and godly parents, who besides his breeding in learning, left him a sufficient patrimony and inheritance.' His intellectual quality was discovered by his first schoolmaster, Samuel Ward, of the Coopers' Free Grammar School, Ratcliffe, who induced Lancelot's parents to suffer him to continue at school instead of being bound 'prentice. Next, Richard Mulcaster won him to come to



the Merchant Taylors' School, whence he proceeded to Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, of which he became a fellow in 1576 and Master in 1589. He attracted the favourable notice of several men of importance, notably of Walsingham. He was a mighty linguist, reputed to know 15 tongues, and a patristic theologian, the most learned and deeply read of his age and nation, and in scholarship lay his chief interest. 'His late studying by candle and early rising at four in the morning, procured him envy among his equals.'

For affairs of Church discipline or of State he had evidently little taste, and though King James used him, as he used every scholar he could lay hands on, for controversial purposes, and he acquitted himself creditably therein, he was never a strong party man. When he came to be of the Privy Council it is recorded that he would speak his mind on church matters but 'meddled little in civil and temporal affairs'.

Of Andrewes' position as a theologian and as a churchman little or nothing need here be said. He believed in the essential connection between Church and State, as the twin manifestation of God's power on earth. His theology was based on authority, and in one

of his sermons he defines the source of this authority as being 'one canon reduced to writing by God himself, two testaments, three creeds, four general councils, five centuries and the series of the Fathers of that period—the three centuries that is before Constantine and two after—as determining the boundaries of our faith.' In other words he was an orthodox Anglican Catholic after the Elizabethan pattern, equally anti-puritan and anti-papist, and in private decidedly partial to ritual. His chapel at Ely was famous for its appointments and its devotional atmosphere, and Laud is said to have copied many of his arrangements.

From 1586, when he became Chaplain to Queen Elizabeth, Andrewes was always in close touch with the court, and he filled successively the offices of Canon of St. Paul's, Canon and later Dean of Westminster, Bishop of Chichester, Bishop of Ely, and Bishop of Winchester, as well as Dean of the Chapel Royal, where his immediate successor was Laud. The most part of his income he spent in charity and on restoring the churches and other buildings in his charge. He died in 1626.



We have our most interesting glimpses of him at Westminster and at Ely. At Westminster he showed, what was not calculated altogether to improve his sermons, his love of teaching. Hacket, Bishop of Salisbury and biographer of Dean Williams, describes how Andrewes would take a class in Westminster School for a week, would have boys to the Deanery from 8 to 11 in the evening to teach them Greek and Hebrew, and on other occasions would take some of them for a walk with him, wherein he would combine exercise with instruction.

At Ely we get an interesting view of him through the eyes of the celebrated Isaac Casaubon, second only to Scaliger among the scholars of that day, who was in England from 1609 to his death in 1614. Casaubon, who spoke no English, found in him not only a fellow student but a most serviceable friend, and he stayed with him for a considerable time at Downham.

Another continental friend was Grotius, and in England he was naturally in close touch with the antiquarian circle of Selden and Camden. It was his lament that there was no published collection of 'Histories and Decrees of Synods' in England that instig-

ated Sir Henry Spelman to one of his tasks. An even more notable friend was Bacon, with whom he was intimate.

### § 3.

There is only one regrettable incident in Andrewes' not very eventful life, his voting for the nullification of the marriage of the Earl and Countess of Essex, a discreditable piece of court scandal according to modern standards. In excuse for Andrewes it has been said that to have voted with the minority would have been a useless risking of the King's favour. But this is as little creditable to a bishop, whose conduct should be guided by something higher than expediency, as hearty agreement with the motion. Moreover, Andrewes was not a time-server. There is a story (preserved by the poet Waller) of his sturdy dissent from his brother of Durham in his compliance in the matter of royal levies on episcopal property, and it is recorded that his very presence was enough to keep the King's unruly member from undue licence. The probability is that Andrewes, who like most of the theologians of his age held what are now regarded as exaggerated views of the sanctity of the royal



prerogative, treated the matter, as he was fairly entitled to do, as one of pure law and not of morality; and in law the soundness of the decision is at least arguable. The genuineness of Andrewes' piety and practical benevolence are established by every other page in his biography, and it is incredible that a man of such character, though being human he was liable to an error of judgment, should have deliberately taken a hand in a base action which he knew to be illegal. He certainly tried to avoid having to take part in the proceedings, but being compelled to attend he was, as the most learned canon lawyer of the day, less likely than the Archbishop and the other voters in the minority to allow his moral repugnance to the motive of the suit and the character of the parties to prejudice his judgment on the point of law.

#### § 4.

Mark Pattison speaks of Andrewes as 'a prelate who if he had not been a bishop might have left an eminent name in English literature'. There seems no reason why even a bishop should not attain this distinction. Indeed, even if Lancelot Andrewes be not held to have done so, his younger contempor-

ary, Jeremy Taylor, certainly did. Nor is it enough to say that Andrewes was always a bishop either in *esse* or in *posse*, whereas the other literary bishops or deans attained office in recognition of un-ecclesiastical labours. Nor, again, that he was a court bishop, occupied with affairs and royal ceremonies, and unable on that account to find time for literature.

The fact is Andrewes had no itch to be a man of letters. He was in a broad sense a schoolmaster, and I do not know that any great schoolmaster has ever written a great book. The spoken word and the inspiring personality have always been his vehicle of expression, the minds and characters of his pupils his 'best piece of poetry'. He taught in his early days at Cambridge, and he continued, as we have seen, to teach the young whenever he had the opportunity. He taught the King and he taught his courtiers, both by his sermons and by his conversation. He must have written out many of his sermons, but did not so far as we know publish them. They were printed, after his death, by the King's Command. His *Preces Privatae* were never intended for any one's use save his own. One or two papers on theological subjects which



he wrote he did not publish. His four controversial pieces, which were written for publication, were composed in Latin and undertaken at the express command of King James, who could not afford to leave his profound knowledge of the Fathers unemployed in the great disputation with Cardinal Bellarmine and other Romanists concerning the Royal authority in church matters.

To the power of the great preacher's eloquence we have the testimony of men of very different temperaments, not only of his fellow divines such as Isaacson and Fuller, but of Philistines as well. Nash, the ribald and reckless young pamphleteer, in *Have With You to Saffron Walden*, both praises him himself and indicates another interesting admirer, Lyly the Euphuist, no mean judge of choice language:

'By Doctor Andrewes own desert and Master Lillie's immoderate commending him, by little and little I was drawne on to bee an auditor of his: since when, whensoever I heard him, I thought it was but hard and scant allowance that was given him, in comparison of the incomparable gifts that were in him.'

Another witness not easily pleased, one would imagine, with a sermon is Sir John

Harington, who in 1608 wrote a short account of Andrewes, published nearly fifty years later in a work entitled *A Brief View of the State of England*. He praises the tendency of Andrewes' sermons to 'raise a joint reverence to God and the prince, to the spiritual and civil magistrate', and says, with particular reference to the second Lenten sermon, that it 'does not go in at one ear and out at the other'.

It is generally agreed that Andrewes' delivery was extraordinarily fine, and it is sometimes suggested that it was to this that his sermons owed the greatest part of their reputation. The written text does indeed constantly suggest to the attentive reader a voice of great power and modulation, able to utter parallel sentences with growing emphasis, to keep some key-word ever ringing in the ear, to enforce contrasts and similitudes by the skilful modulation of its tones. But this does not diminish our praise of the preacher who could thus perfectly deliver his intellectual concepts, or of the writer who could so skilfully reproduce on paper his own fluid eloquence.

But printed the sermons were, in 1629, when Andrewes had lain three years in his



grave, by order of Charles I. The editors were Laud, then Bishop of London, and Bucke-ridge, Bishop of Ely, and in dedicating the collection to the King they wrote :

'We here present to your most Sacred Majestie, a book of Sermons. We need not tell whose they are, the sermons are able to speak their author. When the author died, Your Majesty thought it not fit his sermons should die with him . . . . . And though they could not live with all that elegancie which they had upon his tongue, yet you were graciously pleased to thinke a paper life better than none . . . . . There came to our hands a world of Sermon notes, but these came perfect. Had they not come perfect, we should not have ventured to adde any limme unto them . . . . .'

From this it may be inferred that Andrewes was by no means in the habit of writing out all his sermons, and those we have are almost all those delivered on ceremonious occasions before the Sovereign. Whether therefore we really have the best of Andrewes' sermons is open to question. Evidently their author did not write these out fair from any desire to commend them to posterity, but because either he would bestow greater pains on these sermons or because he had to be particularly careful what he said (for both Elizabeth and James were learned sovereigns and critical) and be able to explain his doctrine to his Royal patron afterwards.

One would rather expect to get more impassioned oratory and more sincere emotion where the preacher gave himself head; though it is improbable that Andrewes at any time contented himself with rendering no more than the written version. The popular pulpit of the age was at Paul's cross, where Master Hugh Latimer had preached 'of the plough', and Andrewes must have filled this pulpit too, and filled it to the satisfaction of his audience, else he could never have achieved his immense reputation.

Nor does a study of the *XCVI Sermons* lead me to regard Andrewes as an entirely academic preacher. Certainly he always makes use of an enormous amount of learning, quoting parallel passages and instances for every phrase and allusion in his text; but his chief source after all is the Bible, that new-found heritage of the English people, which every one could now read with a freshness of perception impossible to the reader of today, whose ears are inured to its true potency. Nothing is more conspicuous in his language than his skilful and accurate use of colloquial English. However deep or however subtle his argument, his language is invariably simple, vigorous and full-flavoured. Indeed he seems



deliberately to eschew the poetic manner of Donne, whose best passages have an emotional quality and a grandeur of form which impresses us today from the printed page as deeply as it did his audience. You cannot profitably take single sentences or passages in Andrewes out of their context. Andrewes suggests comparison with an architect rather than with a monumental mason. He piles up argument on argument, instance on instance, subdividing and subsuming, with a reiterated phrase or word for ever coming in like a tolling bell and marking the central idea of the whole.

Moreover he is such a master of rhythm and of the harmonies of language as easily accounts for the admiration of Lyly. His keywords are always sonorous; you can imagine the voice of the preacher ringing them forth. You begin to expect them, and by carrying on his waves of sound a little longer he postpones the fulfilment and heightens the anticipation of your aural pleasures.

*'Love first: what moveth the mother to all the travail and toil she taketh with her child? She hopes for nothing, she is in years (suppose); she shall not live to receive any benefit by it: it is Love and Love only. Love first.*

And then *hope*: what moveth the *Merchant*, and so the *Husbandman*, and so the *Military-man*, and so all the rest? All the sharp showers and stormes they endure, they *love* them not: it is *hope* and hope only of a rich return . . . . .

In that second Lenten sermon, preached before Queen Elizabeth in 1690, which Harington so praised, the text gives us the keynote—'Thou diddest lead thy people like sheepe by the hands of Moses and Aaron.'

He proceeds to consider his text word by word, in three parts; first, 'Thou, God'.

To begin with God; who beginneth the verse, by whom and to whom we lead, and are led, and in whom leading both beginneth and endeth.

Note how 'lead' rings through the sentence. Three things there are, he goes on, which, distinguish God.

The first is in *duxisti*—thou didest lead . . . . . diddest then and doest still. God hath a prerogative, that he is *Rex a Saeculo*, and *Rex Saeculorum*, was our King of old and shall be our King for ever and ever.

The second is in *Populum Tuum*, thy people . . . . . God's leading hath no marches. This people and all people are His . . . . .

The third is, *Per Manus*, by the hands. For as He guideth the people by the hands, so he guideth the hands themselves, by which he guideth; ruleth by them, and ruleth them; ruleth by their hands, and ruleth in their hearts: is both the shepherd of Israel, leading them like a sheep, and further leadeth Joseph also (their leader) *Tamquam Ovem*, like a sheep . . . . . Why then, *Dicite in Gentibus*,



Tell it out among the Nations (saith the prophet) that God is King; that he is the Tu, the Leader, the perpetual, the universal, principal Leader of his people.

Then he starts off again considering the double use of *rule* for comfort and for fear. Then, to consider the supernatural nature of rule—an ingenious but dangerous argument this, for it depends on the admission that men are *not* by nature like sheep, and that only divine power could make them so. And so again he comes back to his refrain:

Let us see God sensibly in it, and the power of God, yea the miraculous power of God; and say with the prophet, *Thou art God that doest wonders, Thou leddest thy people like Sheepe by the hands of Moses and Aaron.* And so much for the first part, first word, and person.

He proceeds to the second consideration, the full compass of the word *Leading*. Here he raises four points: 'For that it be a leading, it must be *orderly* without straying, *skilfully* without erring, *gently* without forcing, and *certainly* without missing our journey's end.' Beginning from the second point I would quote a passage of some length as a specimen, since the text is not easily accessible, of Andrewes' style.

'Now this *right way*, if we consider where it lieth, the Prophet will tell us, *Thy way O God is in*

*the Sanctuary*; (that is) it is the word of God which is the *Lead-star*, when God is the *Leadsman*. *Sicut oves* it must be, and this is the voice of the true Shepherd, to be listened to of all his flock, that will not rove and run headlong into the Wolf's den. This is the *Pillar of the Cloud* in regard of this people here, to be kept in view of all those that will not perish in the wilderness, wherein is no path. Indeed it is both: the *Pillar of the cloud* before directing us in the way, and the *voice of the Shepherd behind us* (as *Esay* saith) telling us when we misse, and crying, *Haec est via, ambulate in ea*. This is the way, the right way, walk in it.

And in this way, our guiding must be mild and gentle: else it is not *Duxisti*, but *traxisti*; drawing and driving, and no leading. *Leni spiritu non dura manu*, rather by an inward sweet influence to be led, than by an outward extreme violence to be forced forward. So did God lead his people here. Not the greatest pace (I wis) for they were a *year* marching that they might have posted in *eleven days* (as Moses saith.) No, nor yet the nearest way neither. as Moses telleth us. For he fetched a compass divers times, as all wise governors by this example must do, that desire rather *safely* to lead, than *hastily* to drive forward. The *Spirit* of God *leadeth* this people (saith *Esay*) *as an horse is ridden downe the hill into the valley*; which must not be a gallop, lest horse and rider both come downe one over another; but *warily* and easily. And *sicut oves* still giveth us light, seeing the Text compareth it to a sheep gate. Touching which kind of cattle to very good purpose, Jacob (a skilful shepherd) answereth *Esau* (who would have had Jacob and his flocks have kept company with his *hunting* pace.) Nay, not so, Sir, (said Jacob) it is a *tender cattle* that is under my hands, and must be softly driven, as they may endure; if one *should over-drive them but one day*, they would all die, or be laid up for many days.



after. Indeed, Rehoboam left ten parts of his flock behind, only for ignorance of this very point in *Duxisti*. For, when in a boisterous manner he chased them before him, telling them what *yokes* he would make for them, (a far unmeet occupation for a Prince to be a *yoke-maker*) they all shrunk from him presently, and falsified his *prophecie* clean. For whereas he told them sadly, *His little finger should be as big as his Father's whole body*, it fell out clean contrary; for his *whole body*, proved not so big as his fathers *little finger*. A *gentle leading* it must be; and in the beginning, such was the course. Therefore ye have Kings of Canaan in Genesis, for the most part called by the name of Abimelech (that is) *Pater Rex*, a *King* in place, a *Father* in affection. David himself, who full bitterly complaineth, *Ah these sonnes of Zeruah are too hard* too full of *execution* of mee. And (to end this point) thus describeth he his good Prince (in the 72 Psalme) He shall come down (not like hailstones on a house top, but) like the dew into a fleece of wool (that is) sweetly and mildly, without any noyse or violence at all.'

Lastly, in this section, he considers the end of God's leading, to the Sanctuary on earth to His own rest in heaven.

The third part in like manner considers the words *tuum populum*, thy people. For the *populus* alone, he says, 'surely no evil can be said to much of it. But *tuus* makes amends. It is not enough that they be '*Freemen* and not *Villaines*; *Athenians* or *Englishmen* (that is a civill) not a barbarous people.... but that they be God's *own people* and flock.' So

he returns to *vo ses ut ci* and shows the people's need for a guide and ruler, and finally passes on to by the hands of Moses and Aaron, speaking with excellent moderation (with Elizabeth sitting under him) of the divine origin of monarchy, which replaced theocracy, of the responsibility of princes to God (under three heads), and of the distinct duties implied in the two persons of Moses, the civil power, and Aaron, the ecclesiastical; again under three heads. He concludes with no very elaborate peroration :

The Lord by whose Almighty power all governments do stand; those especially wherein the people are *led in the way of his sanctuary*, as he hath graciously begun to *lead* us in that way, so leave us not, till we have finished our course with joy. Knit the hearts of Moses and Aaron that they may join lovingly: teach their hands, and fingers of their hands, that they may *lead skilfully*: touch the *hearts* of the people, that they may be led willingly; that, by means of this happy conduct, surely without error, and safely without danger we may lead and be led forward, till we come to the fruition of His promise, the expectation of our blessed hope, even the eternal joys of the celestial Kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Andrewes is often criticized as being a juggler with words, a quibbler, tracing false analogies and making over-subtle distinctions. It is easy, even from so small a fragment as the passage quoted, to see the reason



for this disparagement. Andrewes so invariably finds his three or four ways of considering any text, and works round so ingeniously to his starting point through a perfect Chinese puzzle of sub-divisions, that we are naturally inclined to suspect a mechanical and insincere method. But his distinctions are not really quite so subtle as his somewhat elaborate and formidable schematization would suggest, and a writer of less scholarly habit, who articulated his material less carefully, and left out the first, second and thirds, the I. I.s and I. 2.s, as Andrewes quite easily could without altering his logical process, would have escaped a good deal of this censure.

Mark Pattison speaks slightly of Andrewes' 'cavil and passion for verbal victory'. It is true that he makes great play with the meanings of words and brings two passages together, away from their context, on the strength of a single word in common. But in an age which still held fast by the literal inspiration of the Bible, this exact study of words was an all important part of scriptural exegesis, and a 'verbal victory' was a very real one. To despise the value of such labour is to despise the motive of the best scholar-

ship of the age, from the work of Erasmus to that of Pattison's own hero, Casaubon. The Puritans might be content with the acceptance of a truth by their own instinct or reason. The Catholic theologian, Roman or Anglican, had to show that his doctrine squared with that of the Early Fathers and the Bible. And all argument on that fruitful theme was idle, as the scholar knew, unless the meaning of every individual word was exactly ascertained. And behind that, as too few realized, lay the important problems of textual criticism. In this last field Andrewes worked, so far as we know, but little; but he, with his unrivalled knowledge of tongues, would have been wrapping his talent in a napkin had he not used it in the making of his sermons.

As an interpreter of scripture, both by exact explanation and by imaginative reconstruction, Andrewes is magnificent. He drives his teaching home too by the notable vividness and unaffectedness of his language. He may give a very latin air to his page by his continual quotations, but he always translates them and they often contribute immensely to the sound and rhythm of his prose. It must be remembered too that in the absence



as yet of the Authorized version the Latin was the only text on which a scholar could well base his arguments (without, of course, having recourse to the Hebrew or Greek originals). And the audience before whom these sermons were preached, not least Elizabeth or James, would be well acquainted with Latin. But otherwise his language is pure, racy English. He touches often on matters of topical interest, and not only shows great ingenuity in relating them to his text, but really makes them throw light the one upon the other. Often, too, he uses his ready command of scripture very wittily, a trait of which the best example is to be found not in a sermon but in *Tortura Torti*, his attack, executed by royal command, on Matthaeus Tortus, alias Cardinal Bellarmine: 'The pope ignores the charge "Feed my Sheep"; he prefers to act on the injunction, "Arise, Peter, kill and eat"'.

§ 5.

Besides the *XCVI Sermons*, which attained great popularity and were several times reprinted, three pieces of Andrewes' handiwork deserve mention.

Of *Toitura Torti* (1609) or the other shorter controversial pieces (*Responsio ad Apologiam Cardinalis Bellarmini* (1610) and the posthumous *Answers to Cardinal Perron*) nothing more need be said. His contemporaries esteemed them as well done, but if Andrewes had written nothing but works of this nature he would have no fame today. His *Preces Privatae* are written in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, not at all in English, and their interest here lies in the irrefutable evidence they afford of the genuineness of their author's Christianity. If to any reader the sermons ever gave an impression of their author as anything short of the sincerest, most modest and most pious of men, the existence of this wholly personal book of devotions might assure him that the impression was a false one. Buckeridge's Funeral Sermon supplies us with an apt commentary on this aspect of Andrewes' character :

His life was a life of prayer. A great part of five hours every day did he spend in prayer and devotion to God. . . And when his brother Master Nicholas Andrewes died, he took that as a certain sign and prognostication and warning of his own death, and from that time till the hour of his dissolution, he spent all his time in prayer ; and his prayer book, when he was private, was seldom out of his hands ; and in the time of his fever and last sickness,



besides the often prayers which were read to him, in which he repeated all the parts of the confession and other petitions, with an audible voice, as long as his strength endured, he did (as was well observed by certain tokens in him) continually pray to himself, though he seemed otherwise to rest or slumber: and when he could pray no longer *voce*, with his voice, yet *oculis et manibus*, by lifting up his eyes and hands he prayed still; and when *nec manus, nec vox officium faciunt*, both voice and eyes and hands failed in their office; then *corde*, with his heart, he still prayed, until it pleased God to receive his blessed soul to himself.

Lastly, it must not be forgotten that Lancelot Andrewes was one of those who, sitting in Jerusalem Chamber, prepared the Authorized version of the Pentateuch and the earlier Historical Books, and in view of his great reputation as a linguist and as a master of language, it cannot be doubted that he had a main hand in the shaping of that crowning glory of English prose. The rhythm and majesty of language which came to the ears of the revisers from their forerunners were not likely to suffer any impairment at the hands of Lancelot Andrewes. The parallelism which is so marked a feature of both the poetical portions of the English Old Testament and of Andrewes' oratory, is traceable to the original Hebrew of the former. No writer more constantly reproduces the effect

of such a passage as, 'at her knees he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead', but on a larger scale, the reiteration spread over a whole paragraph and not compressed into a single sentence. Dip into his Sermons and on any page you will find prose of this texture :

God afflicted some in *mercie* : and others in *wrath*. This was in His *wrath*. In his wrath God is not alike to all ; some he afflicteth in His more *gentle* and mild ; others in His *fierce wrath*. This was in the very fierceness of *His wrath* . . . . .

The Cause then in God was *wrath*. What caused this wrath? God is not a wroth but with sin. Nor grievously wroth but with *grievous sin*. And in Christ there was no grievous sin. Nay, no sin at all. God did it (the Text is plain). And in his fierce wrath He did it. For what cause? . . . . .

Andrewes' Sermons do not, as I have said, show to advantage in selections, and the modern reader is not likely to take kindly to them *in extenso*. There is then little chance of their recovering their place as a living classic. But Andrewes deserves that high commendation due to the artist who makes of a thing of utility a thing of beauty, not diminishing but rather enhancing the utility by his pains. Therefore, whether thou art or art not a Christian, 'stay, it will be worth thy tarrying to know how great a man lies here.'



## JOHN BARCLAY.

### § 1.

IT IS one of the ironies of literary history that so many books for which their authors hoped to secure a longer life and a wider fame by writing them in Latin have by that act been doomed to an ever darkening obscurity. It is a further irony that this obscurity should have been so complete in spite of the hours that generations of youths have devoted to the study of that very Latin tongue. For the number of books, in mediæval and even in modern literature, written in Latin is very large and the quality is high. Without reckoning the philosophers, theologians and lawyers, who to this day do some small traffic in the Roman tongue, there is a very respectable body of poetic and dramatic and historical literature, and even of fiction, lost to the generality of its natural readers by this unhappy preference for what was once an universal language. Many

even of those who achieved greatness in English or in Scots sought a double fame and in doing so lost half their labour.

For even the professed scholar seldom reads a line of modern Latinity. The very name of the author of the once famous *Colloquies* would be unknown to the grammar school boy of today did it not chance to furnish a rhyme for *chiasmus*. Not many perhaps read John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (of which only the title is in Latin); hardly any even of those reads his *Vox Clamantis*. Thomas Campion, that lyrical musician, expended his best skill on his Latin pieces. So did Cowley, the most admired poet of his age. Even Milton wrote much verse, as well as prose, in Latin. George Buchanan, one of the greatest names in Scottish literary history, wrote in no other tongue. An immense amount of talent in the great age of English drama used the language as well as the methods of Plautus and Seneca. All wrote on sand. In Latin More wrote his *Utopia*, Camden his *Britannia*, Selden his *Mare Clausum*. Bacon apologized for writing his *Essays* in English and used Latin for his more valued pieces. In Latin did that later Barclay, Robert the Quaker,



write his famous *Apologia*, and in Latin John Barclay, the subject of this sketch, the most illustrious Scottish man of letters of his generation, wrote all his admirable verse and his two famous prose "romances".

And to such extent did these writers, and a host of others like them, trust to the permanent vogue of their medium that they themselves as a rule took no step to get their works, even in prose, translated into their native tongue.

## § 2.

William Barclay, the father of John, was an Aberdonian by descent and at the time of his marriage was at some pains to prove the nobility of his birth. William Barclay was a staunch partisan of Mary Stuart and migrated to Paris in 1571. Thence he was invited by Charles I., Duke of Lorraine, to Pont-à-Mousson as Principal of the School of Civil Law. Here, in 1582, John was born; one of twins, of whom the other, also a boy, died young. His mother was one Anna de Maleville. He studied at his father's University of Pont-à-Mousson and at Leyden under Justus Lipsius, and became at an early age a proficient Latin scholar, putting forth in

1601 at Pont-à-Mousson, a commentary on the *Thebais* of *Statius*. He was now 19.

Two years later we find him in London; attracted thither, it is likely, by the scholarly reputation of his countryman, the new King James I, for whom he wrote a *Carmen Gratulorum* (1603). William Barclay is said to have come with him, but this is not certain, and he did not in any case remain long. It was in London that the first part of *Euphormionis Satyricon*, a Latin Romance of a scholarly picaresque type, was published, in 1603, with a dedication to James I. In 1605 John was in Angers, where his father for about a year before his death occupied the chair of Law. Here he is said to have been at work on the second and more personal book of the *Satyricon*. In that year he was married, in Paris, to one Louise Debonnaire, the daughter of a paymaster in the French Army. By her he is said to have had two sons and a daughter. In the pleasant little sketch of her in one of his Latin poems there is mention of only two children, but a second son seems to have been born later, in Rome. Only the elder son, the Abbé Barclay, born in 1609, figures in history.



In this same year, 1605, appeared the Paris edition of the first part of the *Satyricon*, the earliest now extant. The Gunpowder Plot occasioned a short pamphlet first published in Amsterdam (1606) and reprinted in the Elzevier editions of *Euphormionsi Satyricon*.

In 1606 he was back in London, enjoying the favour of James I, and we may suppose studying statecraft in no mean school. James is said to have sent him on diplomatic missions to the Emperor Rudolph, to Matthew of Hungary and to Emmanuel Philibert of Savoy. He wrote verses in Latin to Prince Henry and to Robert Cecil, to whom also he dedicated the second part of the *Satyricon* published in 1607. Of these verses he published a collection entitled *Sylvae*, which he dedicated to yet another distinguished recipient of his poetic tributes, the King of Denmark, brother to the Queen and a visitor at this time to the English court.

In 1610 appeared in London the *Apologia* for the *Euphormionis Satyricon*, with which it was later reprinted as a third part. He here defends himself against the charge of

libelling the Jesuits. In 1612 he published in Paris a pamphlet entitled *Pietas*, in defence, against King James's antagonist and his subsequent patron Cardinal Bellarmine, of his father's book *De Potestate Papae*. William Barclay, it may be noted, though anti-papist was still more anti-Calvinist. Of this book Casaubon wrote that Bellarmine *Suum illum librum . . . . a Barclai filio . . . videbit soricina naenia confossioem redditum* "will soon see his book worse mangled than a mouse in a trap by the younger Barclay." In 1614 appeared the *Icon Animorum*, later reprinted as a fourth part of the *Satyricon*, with which it has no real relation, and last of his London volumes, *Poemata: Libri Duo*, a collection of his Latin verses (including the best of *Sylvae*). In 1616, seeing no hope of securing, as a Papist, a sure position at court (and it was only on theological controversies that James was prepared to spend money) he left England, going first to Paris and then, in the same year, at the invitation of Pope Paul V, to Rome. He seems to have retained King James's personal favour to the last, receiving on his departure the King's portrait in a golden locket set with jewels.



His invitation to Rome is said to have been the work of Gondomar, the former Spanish ambassador in London, but Cardinal Barberini (the Ibburranes of his *Argenis*) and his recent opponent Cardinal Bellarmine were his friends.

In return, we may suppose, for the Pope's hospitality, Barclay published at Rome in 1617 *Paraenesis ad Sectarios*, an ineffective contribution to religious controversy. He remained in Rome till his death, his last and most famous work *Argenis* appearing posthumously. He finished the book, says M. Dukas on the authority of a M. S., note in his own 1630 Elzevier edition, on 28th July, 1621, fell ill (of a fever) 1st August and died 12th August. This agrees with Winkelmann's account. He was buried near to the grave of Tasso in the graveyard of Saint Onofrio. The book which had been licensed by Pope Gregory XV and Louis XIII (to whom it was dedicated) was published by Nicolas Buon, under the care of Barclay's friend Peiresc, shortly afterwards.

He is said to have left behind him in M. S. a *History de Bello Sacro* (the capture of Jerusalem by the Franks) and fragments of a *History of Europe*.

## § 3.

Barclay was only 39½ years old when he died and his widow, who though two years older than her husband survived him for 31 years, seems to have been properly proud of her husband. Bayle relates a story of how, observing that his tomb was in all respect similar to one which Cardinal Francis Barberini had made for his preceptor Bernard Guillaume, she sought to destroy it and failing in that attempt had the bust removed from it to her own house. "Her pride would not brook that her husband distinguished for his birth and yet more for his talent and his learning, should be made comparable with a wretched pedagogue".

Barclay sprang into early fame with the first part of the *Satyricon* and must have been well known to the many scholars who were then in England. It is a little surprising therefore that he does not figure more prominently in the annals of King James's court. But the group whose names are mostly closely associated with the King and from whose entertainment he derived his reputation as the only monarch in all Europe who knew how to appreciate learning, that



group in which Launcelot Andrews and Casaubon are the most illustrious, devoted its great parts on learning, as Grotius complained, almost wholly to the study of theology. It was indeed on this understanding and not from zeal for pure scholarship that the King patronized them. He desired the support of classical antiquity for his own theories of the royal prerogative and it was probably as the son of his father, the Civil Lawyer and opponent of the Jesuits, not as the commentator on Statius or the writer of satirical romance that James had welcomed him. These men were assistants of James in his controversy with Bellarmine and others and Barclay would doubtless have been more welcome would he have written more in that line. But though he defended his father's "*De Potestate Papae*" he had thought fit to make his own peace with the Jesuits for the disrespect shown them in his *Satyricon*, and his verses and his *Icon Animorum* were of no service to James's cause. With Casaubon however, we know him to have been intimate. He was with him on the expedition to Greenwich which preceded his death and as one of the few French speakers at court he must

have been very welcome to that great scholar who, though even in Scaliger's lifetime he knew more Greek than any man living, could not in his old age master the English tongue.

There was another circle of scholars, of perhaps greater fame, with whom Barclay must have been acquainted, the antiquaries, Cotton, Spelman, Camden and other friends whose meetings the learned King suppressed. But Barclay seems to have been even less interested in archaeology than in theology, and even pure scholarship was with him only a study of his academic youth. A hundred years later he would have found his congener in Swift rather than in Bentley.

Nevertheless these men knew and esteemed him. Grotius, who was in London for some weeks in 1613, wrote on him a famous epigram (set beneath his portrait in several Paris editions of *Argenis*):

Gente Caledonius, Gallus natalibus. Hic est  
Romam Romano qui docet ore loqui.

which is not strictly accurate, for Lorraine, where Barclay was born, was not then a part of France.

Camden sent copies of *Icon Animorum* to several of his foreign correspondents, and it



is interesting to find one of these writing to Camden from Antwerp in June 1616 and asking for a copy of this same book on behalf of "Rubenius celeberrimus pictor". The same correspondent writes later in the year "I hear Barclay is at Rome and is receiving yearly 1000 gold pieces and his son 300".

#### § 4.

We do not know very much about Barclay's character and opinions beyond what we can infer from his writings. Winkelmann, an early editor, describes him as "of graceful person and medium height, with mild brow (*lene supercilium*), soft gray eyes, dark hair and a cheerful expression". For the rest, we think of him as resembling his own Nicopompus, a brilliant, versatile cheerful personage, of moderate views, easily apprehending both sides of any question and equally ready to turn an elegy on my lady's lapdog or deliver a weighty dissertation on a point of civil government. "He was a man that from his infancy loved learning; but who disdainng to be nothing but a booke-man, had left the Scholars very young, that in the courts of Kings and Princes, he might serve his

prenticeship in publike affaires, his descent and disposition fitting him for that kind of life: wel esteemed of many Princes". In mentality he seems to stand on the threshold of two ages. He is a Humanist of the Renaissance in his scholarship, his dependence on noble patronage, his freedom from superstition tempered by reverence for the old. We see in him a kinship to Machiavelli and to Erasmus. On the other hand he is a Jacobean man of letters, a contemporary of Nash, of Johnson and of Shakespeare, with an eye to the popular forms of art. Were it not that it is written in Latin, the *Satyricon* is as modern as *The Unfortunate Traveller*, and *Argenis* is far more alive and contributes far more to the discussion of actual problems than Lyly's *Euphues* or Sidney's *Arcadia*. Goldsmith (another peripatetic scholar) born a century and a half earlier might have employed forms not so very different from his.

We can well believe in the mildness and cheerfulness of Barclay. His placable character is reflected in his expressed aversion\* from duelling. Though continually satirizing he never seems to have given

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\* See the Dedication, to Louis XIII, of his *Argenis*.



serious offence. He found it necessary to write a defence of his alleged attacks on the Jesuits (under the name of *Acignii*) in the *Satyricon*, but that apparently ended the controversy and they seem to have displayed no hostility to him subsequently. Though a friend of James I and even in *Argenis* an opposer of all extreme clerical claims he enjoyed to the end the patronage of Cardinals and Popes, and though he never abandoned the Roman church he seems never to have been objected to on that score by Protestants or Anglicans. His final withdrawal from England seems to have been due to no personal hostility.

#### § 5.

The *Euphormionis Satyricon* has never yet found an English translator, though Thomas May made a version of the *Icon Animorum* which appears as its fourth book, under the title of *A Mirror of Minds*, published in 1631 (?). Of the *Argenis* there are two early translations and one very much later. The early translators were Sir Robert Le Grys, Knight, and Kingsmill Long, Gent. Their successor, in the 18th century, was Miss Clara Reeve, author of a number of

novels of one of which the name at any rate has still some fame — *The Old English Baron* (1777). Of the two early translators hardly anything besides the authorship of these versions is known. No less a person than Ben Jonson appears on the records of the Stationers' Company as having registered a translation in 1621, that is the very year of the book's appearance in Paris. But there is no further trace of his undertaking and since Le Grys's edition was "upon his Majesty's Command", it seems likely that Ben, who about that time was busy writing court masques, was instructed to do the work by the learned King but turned it over to another. The verses are by Thomas May and had already appeared in Kingsmill Long's translation.

Le Grys' version, a quarto volume, was first published in 1628. This is the date correctly given by Sir David Dalrymple in his 'Sketch of the Life of John Barclay', but later bibliographers write 1629. I have seen only one copy bearing the earlier date, but the 1629 edition, which is that commonly found, differs in no other particular that I have discerned than the substitution of 9 for 8. The title-page runs :



JOHN  
 BARCLAY  
 HIS  
 ARGENIS  
 TRANSLATED OUT  
 OF LATINE INTO  
 ENGLISH:  
 THE PROSE VPON HIS

*Majesties Command:*

By Sir ROBERT LE GRYS, Knight:

*And the Verses by Thomas May, Esquire.*

*With a Clavis annexed to it for the satisfaction of the  
 Reader, and helping him to understand, what persons were by  
 the Author intended, under the fained Names imposed  
 by him vpon them:*

*And published by his Maiesties Command.*

LONDON,

*Printed by Felix Kyngston for Richard Meighen and  
 Henry Seile. 1628.*

The dedication is to the King and makes one wonder how the King or Ben Jonson came to light on Sir Robert. But he is not so ignorant of Latin as he professes to be. With or without a knowledge of Latin grammar he could evidently construe pretty correctly. On the whole, indeed he is a better Latinist than his rival Long, but he

makes one amusing error. Argenis, records that Selenissa was wont to beguile her seclusion by practising archery. She would exercise her arm-muscles with a bow, "*facili arcu fatigabat lacertos*". Which Le Grys delightfully renders, "There with her little Bow she troubled the Lizartes". I fear the fault is wholly Le Grys', for no text that I have seen reads "lacertas". There seems to be no reprint of this version subsequent to 1629.

The other version, Kingsmill Long's, though it must yield place to the Royal Command, can claim the priority in time. It was published in folio in 1625. It was printed by G. P. for Henry Seile. Nothing is said about the verses but they are identical with those given by Le Grys. Of this a second edition was printed "for Henry Seile, at the signs of the Tygres Head in Fleet Street neare the Conduit" in 1636. This is a quarto volume and contains a number of engravings. It is in the words of the title page "The Second Edition, Beautified with Pictures." Long had now risen to the state of "Esquire."

Neither of the two translations is among the very best specimens in this kind of Tudor and Jacobean prose. Le Grys is rather



the more vigorous and his choice of words is good. He is not afraid of the vernacular. But his constructions are a little clumsy, repeating too plainly the Latin form, and the rhythm, the glory of the prose of the age, is poor. Long's is a more fluent version but rather characterless. Miss Clara Reeve, the third translator, remarks: "There is in the style [of *Le Grys*] a simplicity that is pleasing and even respectable, while in the latter there is a kind of affectation that in some places rises to bombast and others descends to vulgarity." Her own version, a plain, insipid performance, was published in 4 octavo volumes in 1772 under the title of "*The Phoenix, or the History of Polyarchus and Argenis.*"

In the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, Professor Bensley, who contributes an admirable account of Barclay, notices an 18th century abridgment by the Rev. John Jacobs, entitled "*The Adventures of Poliar-chus and Argenis*".

These are the only English editions of this famous book, and only two editions of the Latin text have ever been printed in this country, one by Thomas Huggins, at Oxford, in 1634, another by J. Hayes, at Cambridge

in 1673 and 1674. But on the Continent it has had a much more eventful career. Three French versions had appeared before Long's English one and they were many times reprinted. The earliest was one by P. Marcassus in 1622, reprinted in 1626. In 1623 appeared a '*traduction nouvelle*' usually ascribed to P. du Ryer (or Durier), but claimed by Dr. Schmid for one N. Guibert, which achieved greater popularity and was reprinted eight times in the next twenty years. A third version by Coffeteau, Bishop of Marseilles was published in 1624 and three times reprinted in twenty years, a fourth by P. de Lungue appeared in 1628 and was reprinted in 1662; a fifth by the Abbé Josse appeared in 1632 and was reprinted three times, in 1634, 1654 and 1664; the sixth and last version by Savin appeared in 1671.

Translations into all the principal languages of Europe were also made. Dr. Schmid records early versions in Spanish (first published in 1626), Italian (1629 and 1630), German (in 1626, 1631 and four other early versions; besides which a new one was printed as late as 1891), Dutch (1643), Polish (1697), and Icelandic (1694). In the 18th Century the process continued. Versions



appeared in Swedish (1740), in Danish (1746), in Russian (1751), in Magyar (1792).

Moreover the Latin editions were no less numerous. The book was published at Strasburg and at Frankfort in the year following its original appearance and several times reprinted within a decade. At Paris itself a second Latin edition came from Buon's press in 1623, with a portrait of the author by D. du Monotier, engraved by C. Mellar. The third Paris edition is of 1623, and others followed in 1624, 1625, 1632, 1633, 1638, 1639 and 1643. Meanwhile the famous *officina Elzeviriana* had taken it in hand and published many editions, the first, with a *clavis*, in 1627, the second, with a *discursus de auctore* in 1630. In 1659 what purports to be a two volume edition appeared edited by Bugnot, *ex officina Hackiana*, of Leyden and Rotterdam. In reality the first volume is an annotated edition of Barclay's work; the second volume is a continuation or imitation by Bugnot entitled *Archombrotus & Theopompus*. Theopompus is the Dauphin, whom, in dedicating to him the second part of his own volume, he extols as the ideal Prince, resembling *inter alios* Antony of Guevara's Marcus Aurelius. Continuations of this kind

were common, the earliest being one by M. A. M. de Mouchambert, published in Paris as early as 1625.

Another annotated edition was put forth as late as 1768, at Nuremberg, by Winkelmann. This is described as the 17th edition of the work, but in all Dr. Schmid enumerated 54 distinct impressions, all but 8 of them being of the 17th century.

The collation of the Latin texts is a labour I have not undertaken, but I observe that the Elzevier edition of 1627 and all the subsequent editions that I have seen contain in at least one place considerable passages which are not in the early Paris editions and are consequently not in the early French or English versions.

#### § 6.

*Argenis* is in the direct line of descent from the Greek novel—from the Aethiopian Histories of Heliodorus, that shadow author of whom legend, beautifully but unwarrantably, relates that he was a bishop and preferred, the choice being imposed on him, the fame of his book to the retention of his See. In the *Aethiopica* you already get the ingredients of Barclay's romance: the



child—lost, stolen or strayed—restored after long years to its noble parents; the disguised sex; the robbers—pirates or bandits; battle and murder; many voyagings; much loving with its accompaniments of jealousies, rivalries, misunderstandings and impassioned protestations: and those inheritances from comedy, the trusty retainer and the false, intriguing hand-maid. All these things you have in Barclay, blended with as little probability as ever. But Barclay handles them with a good deal of structural skill. There are not quite so many narratives let in to the main fabric and those there are do as a rule help to carry the story or explain a mystery in the matter in hand. Moreover Barclay really does contrive to excite your curiosity as to how the whole imbroglio is to end. He has two heroes, Polyarchus and Archombrotus, and though Archombrotus is allowed to lapse into a disloyalty to his friend that disqualifies him as a Hero of Romance, yet his fall is not irretrievable and the completely happy ending requires that he shall be plausibly recompensed for the inevitable loss—since two men cannot win her of Argenis. The solution of their difficulty is concealed with no little skill. The

introduction of the poet Nicopompus, with his frequent snatches of verse, is a novelty. Unfortunately the verses, neatly turned pieces of Latinity, are at their best merely ingenious and well-phrased and in their English dress wear always an academic and ceremonial air. But Nicopompus was a main figure in what was unquestionably the most distinguishing feature of the book—its discourses and dialogues on matters of statecraft. To these and to the belief that the whole book was a political allegory it owed its highest fame. It was, we may be sure, for its discourses on the advantage of a centralised authority and kindred topics that the great Richelieu valued it as he is said to have done, having it continually in his hands. It was for these and not for its romantic qualities that King James ordered it to be translated into English, that his unlearned subjects might learn properly to estimate the value of monarchy of which in hereditary and constitutional form Barclay is a strong and wise advocate. So late as 1674 an Erfurt professor thought it worth while publishing a collection of political excerpts from the book.



Yet one is tempted, on reading Barclay's books, to fancy that what he really wanted to do was to write novels. But novel-writing was scarcely a more reputable occupation than play-writing. In both modes only the pastoral could claim really genteel sponsorship. And even into the pastoral the serious minded felt it necessary to put an element of political allegory, witness the example of Lyly not only in his rather dull and artificial *Euphues*, but in his comedies, those brilliant and beautiful pieces of poetic wit—poetic, in the highest sense, even in their prose.

And Barclay was a literary soldier of fortune—equipped by his father with a great deal of learning and true Scottish enterprise, and sent forth to open the oyster of the world with his pen. Kings—and learned ones at that—were to be his patrons and he could not suffer himself to indulge without disguise his taste for Romance. So in his first 'novel' *Euphormionis Satyricon*, the scholarly and clerical element is stressed. His wandering hero is no common foot-boy, like Jack Wilton in Nash's famous *Unfortunate Traveller*, but a scholar, the prototype being, it is supposed, in the first

part his father, the Professor of Laws, in the second his precocious self, and both absorb the sack of pure adventure in many solid loaves of philosophic disputation. The two subsequent parts are still more serious: the third being an elaborate defence of himself against the charge of libelling the Jesuits, the fourth the interesting *Eikon Animorum*, the *Mirror of Souls*, a series of essays on the national characteristics of the nations of Europe. The fifth part is, by general agreement, spurious.

This first novel was dedicated to the Scholar King, James Stuart, his second to the young King of France, Louis XIII, and the chosen theme this time is *la haute Politique*. It was written for the great and for the learned and it was not to be thought of that such persons could be interested by a mere idle tale of robbers and shipwrecks and feigned love-makings. Nevertheless there are plenty of these things there. One wonders, indeed, whether this is really a pill coated with sugar, or a toothsome sweet labelled *Pilula Medicinalis*. It is interesting to note that Kingsmill Long when he came to translate it into the vernacular, though he praises it for its wise and political discourses



and insists on the profit to the Reader, yet sets on the title-page a sub-title "The Loves of Ployarchus and Argenis." On the other hand the keys which were soon added to all editions show that the allegory contributed largely to the popularity of the story.

To us however the allegorical truth that may or may not underlie the fiction is of far less interest. The book, in whole and in particulars, is too little capable of exact interpretation to be of any value as an historical document. As a shrewd contemporary estimate of political institutions it has value: as a record of happenings it has none. The man in the street likes to see contemporary events, particularly scandalous ones, hinted at, and notable figures of the hour depicted. But they get no such knowledge from such portraiture, and this kind of writing is journalism rather than literature and not even such journalism as furnishes documents for the historian of subsequent generations, for Barclay cannot be said to give any intimate impressions of his contemporary models or to make them live for us in any degree. Archombrotus decidedly has character; the subtleness with which he is differentiated from Polyarchus is undeni-

able. But in neither Archombrotus nor Polyarchus do we seem to see the living lineaments of their supposed original, Henry of Navarre.

As always in such cases, the editors have been inclined to press the analogies too far, but Barclay's own theory of the political novel, set forth by Nicopompus, makes it certain that he had an allegorical intention. Le Grys' *Key* shows at any rate what the contemporary critics made of it.

The most interesting identifications are of the characters who take part not so much in the romance as in the political dialogues. Of these Nicopompus is Barclay himself; Ibburranes, Cardinal Barberini (alias Pope Urban); Dunalbius, Cardinal Ubaldini, the Papal Legate in England; Hieroleander, Hieronymus Leander. Usimulca, leader of the Hyperaphanii, is, of course, Calvin. Professor Bensley suggests Sillery for Cleobulus, but the old Clavis makers confidently declare him to be Villeroy.

As to the sources of the book little need be said. Much of Barclay's material is the common stuff of all romances, and he draws freely, too, on the Roman historians—notably Tacitus and Polybius. A more re-



markable borrowing is from the Danish *Saxo Grammaticus*, who otherwise touches our literature mainly through his evidence as to the historical element in *Beowulf*. To him M. Dupont traces the whole episode of Theocrine.

### § 7.

There is certainly more varied and elaborate characterization in Barclay than in the vast majority of contemporary novels in the vernaculars. Cervantes is on another plane and the drama was far more highly developed in this as in most other respects. But though there may be elsewhere flashes of acuter insight into human character and what is perhaps more important, of greater vividness in its representation, these are only in scattered passages and on a small scale. The longer and more famous novels, such as Lyly's *Euphues* and Sidney's *Arcadia*, to mention only the English examples, give no such definite and distinctly characterized portraits as the worthy, but rather ineffective Meleander, the spirited Argenis, most faithful in love without being romantically absurd, the two subtly contrasted gallants, Archombrotus and Polyarchus, the dashing 'villain', who

is yet a very serviceable person, Radirobannes, the plausible and disloyal Lycogenes. Even the quite minor figures have a certain air of reality, though most of them are of a type common to all books of this kind—Selenissa the intriguing lady-in-waiting, Hyanisbe, the 'long lost' mother, and the councilors and courtiers, though in the main they exist to be interlocutors in Barclay's political dialogues, have yet a consistent individuality and now and then are lighted up with touches of personal and even humorous triviality; Nicopompus, for example, who disarms criticism by attributing his verses to his small son, an incident which reminds us of the alleged paternal authorship of *Euphormionis Satyricon*. There is humour too in such touches as the hoarseness of the herald who had to read Hyanisbe's "exceeding long epistle".

The whole story is, like so many books in those "spacious" days, longer than modern taste entirely relishes, but the plot, in spite of the many interpolated narratives, is closely and skilfully connected. The interpolations are not irrelevant tales but pieces of the history (of which the action begins, in the most approved modern fashion, near



the crisis) told retrospectively, and of necessity for the elucidation of the whole. How cunningly devised a situation is that at the end of the book when Polyarchus, being induced by Hyanisbe to lay aside his natural hostility towards Archombrotus, is brought before Meleander only, as he thinks, to be mocked by the sight of that King, after reading Hyanisbe's letter, embracing Archombrotus and persuading Argenis even to do the same. Poliarchus lays hand on sword and for a moment vows vengeance on the faithless lady love. Yet two pages later all is satisfactorily explained and Argenis is his bashful betrothed and Archombrotus his most affectionate friend.

In no age has the book lacked its admirers. Cowley thought it the finest Romance ever written. Cowper wrote of it in a letter to S. Rose: "It is interesting in a high degree; either in incident that can be imagined, full of surprise, which the reader never fore-stalls, and yet free from all entanglement and confusion. The style, too, appears to me such as would not dishonour Tacitus himself". The praise of Coleridge is to be found in his brother-in-law, Southey's copy of the book (in the Grenville Library). Hallam

places Barclay second only to Cervantes. On the continent Richelieu and Leibnitz were among its devoted readers. No common book could win praise from critics of such different stamps.

§ 8.

As a Latinist Barclay was highly, and even extravagantly, eulogized by his own contemporaries, notably by Hugo Grotius, and their praise has been echoed by Coleridge, Hallam and other modern critics. Against these, however, must be set the adverse judgment of Scaliger who says he could 'scarcely read six pages of it.' But Scaliger was a very censorious person who disliked the English and judged Latin by the best classical standard. Barclay, who used Latin as a living tongue, never aimed at the Ciceronian classicism that became the pure scholar. Also, as he seems not to have been a Greek scholar Scaliger would not regard him as 'doctissimus.' In contemporary romance Scaliger probably took no interest at all. If one whose reading in later Latin is narrow may venture an opinion, these eulogies are not undeserved. Barclay avoids barbarisms on the one hand and classical clichés (to



which the modern Latinist, like the Babu writer of English, is most prone) on the other. He writes clearly and pithily and achieves at times an almost Tacitean cadence and a little of the impressive pregnancy of Tacitean utterance. Coleridge declared that he was to be preferred to Livy, Hallam, whose praises are more modified, finds him more akin to Petronius Arbiter, with whom of course his subject matter more naturally links him. His vocabulary is as pure as can be desired in a writer who uses Latin as a living tongue and not as an instrument of academic fame. Neither his diction nor his syntax would always please the modern schoolmaster, but Barclay, it must be remembered, was constantly reading the Latin of all periods, and speaking it in common life, and was not seeking to reproduce faithfully the idiom of the "golden" age. He uses, too, a more loosely figurative, a more "coloured" style than the best Roman writers have cared for.

But what matters it now how he wrote. He rejected the English tongue, and was not fortunate enough to find a translator of genius. The third centenary of *Argenis'* birth heard no echo of his former fame.





## ABRAHAM COWLEY.

### § 1.

‘**W**HO now reads Cowley?’ asked Pope, some three-quarters of a century after Cowley’s death:

Who now reads Cowley? if he pleases yet,  
His moral pleases not his pointed wit;  
Forget his epic, nay, Pindaric art;  
But still I love the language of his heart.

*(Epistle to Augustus, 11. 75—8.)*

But Cowley’s fame was not dead, as Pope proceeds to testify. ‘Yet surely, surely these were famous men,’

In all debates where critics bear a part  
Not one but nods and talks of Johnson’s art,  
Of Shakespeare’s nature, and of Cowley’s wit.

*(ibid. 11. 81—3.)*

Half a century later this state of things had not altered. Johnson (Samuel, this time, not Ben) and his syndicate of booksellers take Cowley as the starting point for their survey of the field of modern English poetry. Johnson treats Cowley as the last and the

highest product of the 'metaphysical school', whose beginnings he finds, in England, in Jonson and Donne; and though Johnson had little liking for that mode of writing, he is according Cowley very high rank among English poets. He speaks of Cowley's 'Pindarism' as having 'prevailed about half a century', which would date its decline at the period of Pope's rise, but his subsequent censure of the  *Davideis*  suggests that Cowley was still held in high regard: 'there are not many examples of so great a work, produced by an author *generally read, and generally praised*, that has crept through the century with so little regard'.

Pass on another century, and the fading memory of Cowley's fame is wholly gone. In 1880, Mr. T. H. Ward could write: 'except for a few students like Lamb and Sir Egerton Brydges, Cowley's verse is in this century unread and unreadable. Not even the antiquarian curiosity of an age which reprints Brathwaite and Crowne has yet availed to present him in a new edition.' This last reproach Cowley's own University of Cambridge has since removed, and modern criticism, including Mr. Ward's, has in some small degree restored his reputation; but he



still lacks readers, though the present age has more sympathy than any since their own day with his more mystical contemporaries and forerunners, and his own style of verse should prove far more to its liking than to that of Pope or Johnson, coupleteers both.

§ 2.

Cowley's life, had it ever been written at full length, should have proved more interesting than most poets', for he lived in stirring times and played an active and eventful part. But I do not think increased knowledge of the man would help us to any better appreciation of his poetry. For that is only in a very general way based on his experience; rather it reflects the play of his fancy and his intelligence. It displays learning more than wisdom, quick perception of the incongruities and resemblances in ideas and things rather than a 'philosophy of life' or any burning passions. He was, in the jargon of the literary historian, a wit, not a seer, or even a singer.

Cowley was of humble birth, but bred among the aristocracy and consequently perhaps a little too apt to overvalue that intellectual facility which had won him his

elevation in station. He was born in 1618, the posthumous son of a London stationer (Johnson says a grocer), and at a very early age was infected with the virus of poetry by reading Spenser's *Faery Queen*, a copy of which lay in his mother's parlour. He was sent to Westminster School, the nursery of Ben Jonson and several of his famous 'sons', then presided over by the learned William Camden. He learned with fatal facility and failed to get elected, at his first attempt, to a scholarship at Trinity, Cambridge, although both in English and in Latin he had already made himself known as a poet. He was however duly elected in the following year, 1637, and proceeded to Cambridge,\* 'where by the Progress and Continuance of his Wit, it appeared that two things were joined in it which seldom meet together, that it was both early and lasting.'

He was still at Cambridge, now Fellow of Trinity and a noted wit, when the Civil War broke out, and he removed from Puritanical East Anglia to Laudian Oxford, where he attracted the favourable notice of the King and Queen, and of the excellent and talented Lucius Carey, Lord Falkland. From now on-

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\* According to Johnson he went to Cambridge in 1636.



wards he was in royal employment, being particularly charged with coding and decoding the royal correspondence. When the King's fortunes were in eclipse, Cowley went to Paris with the Queen† and his immediate chief Lord St. Albans. He returned to England in 1656 on some kind of secret service and was seized by the Commonwealth authorities, but released on bail, when he turned Doctor of Physic§ and complied with the *de facto* government till Cromwell's death. He then again went to France, with the consent, it is presumed, of his surety and without any molestation from the now tottering government. At the Restoration he returned to London and court attendance; but Charles, though very complimentary towards him, was in no hurry to afford him any material comfort. At length, through the good offices of St. Albans and of Buckingham, he obtained a lease of certain lands of the Queen at Chertsey, to which neighbourhood he retired in 1665. Here he died, at the

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† To this the portrait of Cowley in the N. P. G. assigns the date 1646. It also states that he had been entered at St. John's College, Oxford.

§ He was subsequently one of the original members of the Royal Society.

Porch House, in 1667, being not yet forty-nine years old.

The bulk of Cowley's work is not great, though he began to write at the tenderest possible age, his *Poeticall Blossomes*, including *Constantia and Philetus*? and *The Tragicall History of Pirus and Thisbe* (which he claimed to have written at ten years of age), being certainly in print by 1633. While he was still 'Kings Scholler in Westminster Schoole' he wrote a pastoral comedy, *Loves Riddle*; and at Cambridge a Latin comedy, and he had a comedy, *The Guardian*, acted there before Prince Charles. He wrote also many poetic pieces during these and the following years, which were collected into a folio volume in 1656 under the four headings, I. Miscellanies; II. The Mistress; III. Pindarique Odes; IV. Davideis. This volume includes the bulk of Cowley's English work, but after the restoration he published his longest Latin poem, *Of Plants*, a new version of his early comedy under the title of *Cutter of Coleman Street* (not *THE Cutter*), and a few *Odes and Verses upon several occasions*; all of which, together with the contents of the 1656 folio, were collected after his death into another folio, wherein also first appeared



those admirable examples of the 'language of his heart', *Several Discourses by way of Essays, in Verse and Prose*. This collection, edited by Thomas Sprat, appeared in 1668 and was often reprinted in two volumes. A third volume, containing the rejected early work, appeared in 1681.

### § 3.

There is surprisingly little influence of Cowley's varied and stirring experiences to be traced in this body of verse. Much of it, being occasional, does, of course, contain direct references to historical events and personages; but on the manner of the verse and the personality of the writer these happenings wrought little or no change. The man and his art seem to slip through these eventful years, reflecting them indeed from their surface, but essentially untouched. Cowley indeed claims that he never had any natural taste for a court or public life, and that his literary studies and creative works were a thing apart, and when, 'turn'd beyond forty', he withdrew from the business of the world, he was at last following his true bent.

Westminster has always been a nursery for poets, teaching them, as she did Cowper, 'to

set a distich into six and five', in English as well in Latin, and Cowley, 'made irremediably a poet' before he was twelve by the infection of Spenser's tinkling rhyme and dancing numbers (the phrase is Cowley's), is a very type of the poet made as well as born. He was a born poet beyond a doubt: but he suffered from precocity and perhaps from excess of instruction. He acquired a manner very early, before he had any matter to employ it on, and his facility later led much of his best work to spend itself in wide, shallow, ineffective rivulets of verse instead of gathering head and cutting deep and solid-bottomed channels.

This manner of his Johnson has labelled, for all time, 'metaphysical'. He does not define metaphysical, and the meaning it here bears is not its philosophical one; but the examples he quotes from Cowley himself and from Donne make clear what he means by it. Lewis Carroll might have explained it as a portmanteau word, a blend of 'metaphorical' and 'physical'. With greater etymological truth we might define it as 'confusing natures', for the chief characteristic of the style is an abundance and elaboration of metaphors, drawn mostly from the physical



sciences, which, at the instigation of Bacon and his disciples, were being much studied in literary circles. 'The most heterogeneous ideas,' says Johnson, 'are yoked together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions.'

Donne is today a poet who receives much attention; and George Herbert and the mystics—Vaughan, Crashaw, Traherne—with their attempts to transcend reason and the senses and get at the essence of the object, if less written of, are nearer akin than any other group of poets to more than one type of contemporary poetry. But Cowley, though Johnson was perfectly right in setting him in this company, has marked differences, and it is to these distinctive qualities he owes his contemporary popularity and his later oblivion.

#### § 4.

The poet of wide contemporary reputation, if he is not simply a bad poet or a people's poet of the ballad-making type, must do one of two things: he must either take an existing form, which is known to be approved by the critics, and exploit it by making it more attractive to the general reader, in

theme and in style, or he must take a popular subject and treat it skilfully in any easily read metre. Thus a tolerably good poet simplifying and polishing his predecessors' style may come to be thought a very good one; a good story-teller writing in passably good verse may be hailed as a great poet. Scott may serve as an example of the second, Cowley of the first.

Cowley is an easy poet : he wrote with ease, he can be read with ease. He is seldom obscure, discordant, or dull. His predecessors, particularly from the worldly-wise-man's point of view, were frequently all three. He was not quite as 'correct' as Waller, so that even Dryden thought him a great poet but not a good writer, and Pope, who had abnormal gifts in this direction, quite eclipsed him. Yet the most superior persons would have to admit that he was learned and gifted with all the recognized poetic qualities of the day—a day which had lost sight of the true merits of Shakespeare, and as yet knew not its own particular star, Milton. Here was a poet of the widest and deepest learning who yet wrote Anacreontics and verses to his mistress (apparently a quite apocryphal person); who wrote of Mr. Hobbes's philosophy



so that any man might understand his meaning and enjoy his rhythmic verse; who translated Pindar into easy and mellifluous English; who even wrote a sacred epic which made David and Jonathan and Michal as interesting as that popular hero, Fairfax's (and Tasso's) Godfrey of Bulloigne.

Why then, it will be asked, if Cowley really possessed these poetic gifts, did he so quickly lose his reputation and still more quickly his readers? Because, borne on the crest of the metaphysical wave, he went with the fashion too far, into the trough of the wave, so that it was clear, to more reflecting readers and to a generation not bred to the taste for it, that the metaphysical manner had degenerated into a mere fashionable device and was not, as it had been on the lips of its first users, a real help to the expression of subtle and hardly comprehended ideas. And, further, because, so far as concerned his movement towards clarity and fluency, others very soon carried it further, particularly with respect to the metre in which Cowley wrote his epic, but not, in bulk, anything else, the fivefooted couplet. Herein Waller, a very empty poet, had achieved greater technical success, and after him Dryden and then Pope made Cowley's

verse seem rough and unskilful. Of the Ode, though he may have misused the name of Pindar, he remained a master, but the couplet, as we know, swallowed up all its brethren, not even Dryden's magnificent work sufficing to keep this one alive. Johnson thought little of this part of Cowley's poetry, but Johnson was equally scornful of Gray's *Odes*, and would probably not have valued Wordsworth's.

There remain the Essays, of which the prose portion has of late years been often reprinted, so that Cowley has oddly enough been in greater esteem as a prose writer than as a poet. Of the verse 'essays', some approximate to the style of the Poems on Various Occasions, some are in that simple gnomie vein which the coupleteers now and then affected, notably, for example, Pope in his 'Happy the man whose wish and care A few paternal acres bound.' It is to these probably that Pope refers with so much affection in the familiar lines I have already quoted. But it was not on these that Cowley's original reputation rested, and though possibly his best they are certainly not his most characteristic work.



## § 5.

'Wit' is the quality which has always been associated with Cowley's name, and the association is justified; but Cowley's 'wit' needs to be distinguished from the later, much better known Popian variety, 'what oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed'. Ingenuity and novelty are here more sought after than that common sense and polished simplicity at which the couplet writers aimed.

Cowley himself wrote an ode 'Of Wit'. We learn from it several things which wit, in the author's view, is not:

'T is not in Tale, 't is not in Jest,  
Admired with Laughter at a Feast  
Nor florid Talk . . . . .

'T is not to force some lifeless Verses meet  
With their five gouty Feet.

'T is not when two like Words make up one Noise  
Jests for Dutch Men and English Boys  
In which who finds out Wit, the same may see  
In An'grams and Acrostiques Poetry.

'T is not such Lines as almost crack the Stage,  
When Bajazet begins to rage.  
Nor a tall Met'phor in the Bombast way,  
Nor the dry Chips of short lung'd Seneca  
Nor upon all things to obtrude,  
And force some odd similitude.

'What is it then?', he asks, and, alas, we are not greatly enlightened by his own answer:

In a true Piece of Wit all things must be,  
Yet all things there agree.

This is not a satisfactory definition, even though he adds the 'odd similitude',

As in the ark. . . . .

Yet Cowley's meaning can be partly guessed at and a closer examination of his own practice will make it clearer.

This ode is one of the earlier pieces printed under the heading of *Miscellanies*, of which Cowley speaks disparagingly as having 'no extraordinary virtue'. There is one piece here that has been honoured by inclusion in many anthologies, *The Chronicle*, a list of the fair ones who had in succession possessed the poet's heart, and the lines on the death of his friend the poet Crashaw are interesting and skilful, though not equal to his elegy *On the Death of Mr. William Harvey*, a really moving poem and not unworthy to be mentioned in the same breath with Milton's and with Matthew Arnold's similar poems. But this collection as a whole would not have won a mature poet any high reputation and,



what is more, there is not a great deal that would make the reader remark particularly on Cowley's wit. The similes are many, but not extravagant and not sustained in the way Herbert's, for example, are. It is not at all easy to classify Cowley at this time. His earliest master in poetry was Spenser, but there is not a great deal of Spenserian influence evident, either in matter or in manner, even in those early *Poetical Blossomes*. As becomes a Westminster poet he seems to owe more to Jonson, in his commemorative and complimentary vein, and to the Romans, notably Horace and Ovid, and but that he was in France we should expect to find him among the fifty three poets (and one publisher) who lamented the death of that illustrious 'son of Ben', Will Cartwright. It is only here and there that Cowley touches the note of true poetry, but he shows a rather remarkable faculty for avoiding the extremes of fatuous rhetoric in which even the young Dryden indulged.

In the second section of his '56 folio, *The Mistress*, the conceits are greater and more. The testimony of credible witnesses can be brought to prove the insincerity of these amorous pieces, and the internal evidence

agrees therewith. But the verse is bright and facile; no one before the Queen Anne men wrote better than he such elegant jingles as this :

I know 't is sordid and 't is low  
 (All this as well as you I know)  
 Which I so hotly now pursue :  
 (I know all this as well as you).

While this is in the century's best lyric manner :

Love in her Sunny Eyes does basking play ;  
 Love walks the pleasant Mazes of her Hair,  
 Love does on both her Lips for ever stray  
 And sows and reaps a thousand Kisses there.

*The Spring* is a charming and most skilful piece of prettiness and wit, and *The Wish* is a very graceful expression of the modest ambitions which, in spite of the cynicism of the very urban Doctor Johnson, he sincerely fostered and in the end gladly achieved :

Ah, yet, e'er I descend to th' Grave,  
 May I a small House, and large Garden have!  
 And a few Friends, and many Books, both true,  
 Both wise, and both delightful too!  
 Oh, Fountains, when in you shall I  
 Myself, eas'd of unpeaceful Thoughts, espy?  
 Oh Fields! Oh Woods! When, when shall I be made  
 The happy Tenant of your Shade?

*The Mistress* won great popularity, which probably led Cowley to stress the element of



conceit in his subsequent poetry. The *Pindaric Odes* which follow possess admirable qualities,—moving language, melody and imagery. Few poets have ever written in such a coloured style yet with such lucidity and directness. The seventh stanza of the second ode will furnish a brief example; the subject is the story of the infant Hercules strangling the serpents:

Some of th' amazed Women dropp'd down dead  
 With Fear, some wildly fled  
 About the Room, some into Corners crept,  
 Where silently they shook and wept.  
 All naked from her Bed the passionate Mother leap'd  
 To save or perish with her Child,  
 She trembled and she cried, the mighty Infant smil'd  
 The mighty Infant seem'd well pleas'd  
 At his gay gilded Foes.  
 And as their spotted necks up to the Cradle rose,  
 With his young warlike Hands on both he seized;  
 In vain they rag'd, in vain they hist,  
 In vain their armed Tails they twist,  
 And angry Circles cast about,  
 Black Blood, and fiery Breath, and pois'nous Soul he  
 squeezes out.

To object to these Odes that they do not really represent the prosody of Pindar is little to the point. The first two are indeed translations, but elsewhere an unjustified name should not be allowed to damn vigorous and full-blooded verse. At times the rhyme and the rhythm are too much in the manner of

the Comic poet, but at least these odes are never, as most of their successors have been, turgid and full of air. They will suffer the pricking of a hole or two in them without deflation. In the third ode (an Horatian one) he uses of Pindar words that are not inapplicable to himself :

Whether at Pisa's Race he please  
 To carve in polish'd verse the Conqu'rors Images,  
 Whether the swift, the skilful, or the strong,  
 Be crowned in his nimble, artful, vigorous Song,  
 Whether some brave young man's untimely Fate  
 In words worth dying for he celebrate,

The Grave can but the Dross of him devour,  
 So small is Death's, so great the Poet's Power.

The ode called *The Resurrection* is a good example of what Cowley calls the 'enthusiastical manner,' and *To Mr. Hobs* a panegyric not only well-phrased but, what is rarer in panegyrics, well-reasoned. Indeed hardly one of the Odes fails to impress as being the work of a man not merely of exceptional learning and metrical skill, but of real intellect and vision.

### § 6.

*The Davideis* has had few admirers and today, I suppose, has no readers. Nobody reads epics, good or bad, and the story of



David is much more heroically told in the Book of Samuel. The poem was, we are told, to have had twelve books, because the Aeneid had. For a similar bad reason it was to have ended before David acquired his kingdom. Yet in spite of all this and of a notable inferiority of the whole to the parts, the poem has its merits. The verse never lapses into mere connecting links between episodes. There are many bad lines and passages, but hardly any flat ones. Cowley always, here and elsewhere, has something to say. It may be the wrong thing, but it is never dull prosing, nor yet mere sound and fury. And it is no small feat to have written even four books of an epic and kept clear of that Scylla and that Charybdis.

The *Davideis*, though printed as the third section of the Works, is supposed to have been written at Cambridge. The fourth or fifth sections really were the last composed and represent Cowley's art at its maturest and best. Leigh, one of the contributors to Cartwright's posthumous *Collected Poems*, had written in 1651,

Give us what Cowley's later years brought forth.  
His Mistressse shows he was a wit by birth;

suggesting with sound judgment that a

less exuberant and more thoughtful maturity would bring added qualities to Cowley's muse. In these pieces, if Cowley's head is still among the clouds of fancy, his feet are firmly planted on the ground of personal experience. The 'occasions' of the first section supply substance for Cowley's playful or phantastic humour: in the second, he is giving utterance to the ripe judgment of a reflective and well stored mind. *The Complaint*, in which Cowley laments his lack of advancement, abounds in similes, but of a most appropriate kind. There is true wit, in the modern as well as in the metaphysical sense of the word, in the fourth stanza :

As a fair morning of the blessed spring,  
 After a tedious stormy night,  
 Such was the glorious entry of our king  
 Enriching moisture dropp'd on every thing.  
 Plenty he sow'd below, and cast about him light.  
 But then (alas) to thee alone,  
 One of old Gideon's Miracles was shown.  
 For ev'ry Tree, and ev'ry Herb around,  
 With Pearly Dew was crown'd,  
 And upon all the quickened Ground,  
 The fruitful Seed of Heav'n did brooding lye,  
 And nothing but the Muses Fleece was dry.

Apt too, and anticipating Keats's 'realms of gold', is his metaphorical account of his own absorption in poetry, whereof the spirit



Stolest me away,  
And my abused Soul did'st bear  
Into thy new-found Worlds, I know not where,  
Thy Golden Indies in the Air.

In the *Ode, Sitting and Drinking in the Chair made out of the Reliques of Sir Francis Drake's Ship* we see Cowley's fancy playing freely round a congenial theme, and a poem such as this enables us most easily to answer the question what precisely Cowley's wit was, to understand his explanation of it as containing 'all things'. Wit is the exploitation of a theme, widely and deeply. An episode or an abstract notion is taken and played with, as the Jacobean divine played with a text, illustrating by parallel instances, expounding it in all its possible meanings, linking it up with its cognates, tracing it to its antecedents. Not all the possibilities are ever exhausted in a single poem, but every writer tries to present his theme in a new light and to wring some further drop of meaning out of it. A high degree of fancy and of knowledge is required to play the game successfully. At its best this method really does open new windows for the soul and help the world to grasp a little more of its own meaning. At its worst, as Johnson wrote, 'to write on

their plan it was at least necessary to read and think. No man could assume the dignity of a writer by descriptions copied from descriptions, by imitations borrowed from imitations, by traditional imagery and hereditary similes, by readiness of rhyme, and volubility of syllables.'

§ 7.

The *Discourses by Way of Essays* give us Cowley still in early middle age but in retirement, and, we may believe, genuinely contented with it. He is no longer writing for a court public, but for himself and his friends: and though he retains, in a greater or less degree, the poetic habits that he had formed, there is a return to that simpler, easier way of writing, as of living, which Cowley suggests was in accordance with his natural bent. The prose portions of this collection are perhaps in higher favour today than the verse, but they both have the same virtue. They read like the unforced utterances of a full mind. To do justice to Cowley's comely and decorous undress you should forget Dryden and the Queen Anne men and contrast it with the elaborate full dress or else untidy attire of his predecessors or contemporaries. His



sentences are of fair length, but we never lose our way in the middle of them ; he never gets out of breath ; he never rants ; he never assumes the judicial solemnity of Bacon. He has colour, variety of rhythm, and the accurate vocabulary which lends distinction to all the earlier English prose before our metaphors were dead and scholarship looked on as pedantry. If we add that what he says is as sensible as his way of saying it, we have fully justified the popularity of his prose essays.

The verses are largely translations: passages, mere snatches some of them, which made a personal appeal to the poet, from Horace, Martial, Virgil, Claudian—the last named represented by an admirable version of the famous lines on the Old Man of Verona. The original pieces are of the same easy, casual nature—interpolations from himself, an English version of his own Latin, improvisations, in only a few cases a full length poem. The eighteenth-century critics were wont to blame Cowley for not writing smoothly, and his prosody has a freedom (it is not necessarily carelessness, for he had well-considered views on the subject) of which even Dryden disapproved and Pope and John-

son emphatically damned. But Cowley could be musical when he wished, and even in these familiar verses he can write as elegantly as any poet need :

Ah slothful Love, could'st thou with Patience see  
 Fortune usurp that flow'ry Spring from thee;  
 And nip thy rosie Season with a Cold,  
 That comes too soon, when Life's short year grows  
 old.

OR,

Was it for this, that Rome's best blood he spilt  
 With so much falsehood, so much Guilt?  
 Was it for this that his ambition strove,  
 To equal Caesar first, and after Jove?

OR,

Sleep is a God too proud to wait in Palaces  
 And yet so humble too, as not to scorn  
 The Meanest Country Cottages ;  
 His Poppy grows among the Corn.  
 The Halcyon Sleep will never build his Nest  
 In any stormy Breast.

OR,

So gracious God, (if it may lawful be  
 Among those foolish Gods to mention thee)  
 So let me act, on such a private Stage  
 The last dull Scenes of my declining Age ;  
 After long Toils and Voyages in vain,  
 This quiet Port let my toss'd Vessel gain ;  
 Of Heav'nly Rest, this Earnest to me lend,  
 Let my Life sleep, and learn to love her End.

He never lost the art or the philosophy  
 which enabled him as a boy to write thus:

Thus would I double my Life's fading space,  
 For he that runs it well, runs twice his Race.



And in this true Delight,  
These unbought Sports, this happy State,  
I would not fear, nor wish my Fate,  
But boldly say each Night,  
Tomorrow let my Sun his Beams display  
Or in Clouds hide them; I have liv'd to Day.

Clouds may have obscured the brightness  
of Cowley's fame. But he was a poet.





## SIR JOHN VANBRUGH.

### § 1.

THE acknowledged masters of English comedy may be reckoned on the fingers of one hand—Shakespeare, Jonson, Dryden, Congreve and Sheridan. If the fingers of the second hand are to be used, Vanbrugh must be one of those enumerated, together perhaps with his two contemporaries, Wycherley and Farquhar, with Goldsmith, who as the author of but a single play may hardly claim the highest rank, and with Wilde. Of living authors, following the wisest precedents, I take no count. Future critics may prefer another Irishman for inclusion in this list, but it should not, I think, be to the exclusion of Vanbrugh.

Macaulay, whose review of Leigh Hunt's edition of Vanbrugh and his three great contemporaries is the commonest source of popular knowledge on the subject, did Vanbrugh some disservice. Taking the four writ-

ers in chronological order, he devoted, with admirable result, so much space to the first two that he had none left for any detailed criticism of the second pair, an omission the more to be regretted in that Vanbrugh was a lively and entertaining person, of varied activities and intimately associated with several of the most picturesque personages of his age, admirable subject for Macaulay's portraiture.

It is to be wondered at that no one should ever have written a life of any length, or even a monograph, of so famous a man, second only to Congreve among the playwrights of his age, and second to none as an architect after Wren's death, Clarencieux King-of-Arms, a notable figure in society, and distinguished by the very particular enmity of the great Duchess Sarah. Moreover, his life still presents several unsolved problems, notably those of his early incarceration in the Bastille and of his apparently protracted wooing. He was, too, a most frank and lively letter-writer.

## § 2.

The baptism of John, second son of Giles Vanbrugh and of Elizabeth his wife, is re-



corded in the register of St. Nicholas Acons, London, under the date January 24, 1663/4. The baptisms of an elder brother and of three sisters are also here recorded. Shortly after John's birth (having apparently added another daughter to his family) his father migrated to Weaver Street, Chester, and the register of Holy Trinity Church there, from 1667 to 1681, shows the births of seven more brothers and six more sisters. Of this large brood thirteen are mentioned in their father's will, dated 1683. Here John is described as the eldest son. Giles Vanbrugh was by trade a sugar baker and a man of good standing. His father, also Giles (or Gilles), had apparently come to England from Flanders early in the 17th century. According to Sir John's account, and as a member of the Heralds' College he should have had some knowledge of this sort of thing, he came from Ghent to escape Alva's Papist zeal. On the other side John was of good English stock, his mother Elizabeth being a daughter of Sir Dudley Carleton, of Imber Court, Surrey.

Of Vanbrugh's education nothing is known, but there is no doubt that he spent his early manhood in the army and he is subsequently spoken of as 'Captain' Vanbrugh.

His military career, however, is not easy to follow. In January 1685/6 John Vanbrugh was granted a commission in Lord Huntingdon's Regiment. In 1686 he left this regiment. Next we find, in February 1688/9, Ensign John Brook in the list of the 14th Foot, Colonel Beveridge's Regiment, and we know that the dramatist thus spelt his name on occasions. In 1692 Luttrell, the diarist, refers to a case, of which the Court-martial documents (it was held, curiously enough, at Bruges) are extant, in which a Captain Vanbrugh, 'of Colonel Tidcombe's regiment, late commanded by Colonel Beveridge deceased,' killed the said Colonel Beveridge. The evidence showed that Beveridge, who often provoked his inferiors, had been to blame for the quarrel and that Vanbrugh was of a 'peaceable quiet temper'. Vanbrugh was acquitted. This may have been a cousin, Dudley Vanbrugh, whose name, so spelt, also appears in the list of the 14th Foot in 1688/9, or John may by this time have received promotion. It is certainly odd that the variant 'Brook' should in the same list be used for the name of one cousin and not for the other.



But in December 1695 we find John Brooke gazetted lieutenant in Col. Thomas Farrington's Regiment, and in the following month John Brooke, Esq., is to be Captain in Lord Berkeley's Marine Regiment, an appointment which, elsewhere, Lord Berkeley is found promising to a Mr. Vanbrook who had been at sea with Lord Carmarthen the year before. Finally, in 1698 the name of Captain John Vanbrook appears in the Home Office list of officers on half pay.

We cannot be sure which, if any, of these references are to Sir John. If all of them, then we must infer that though cleared by court-martial he lost his captaincy in the 14th Foot and served as a lieutenant or even as ensign with some unknown regiment in 1694.

It was during this military part of his career that the episode of the Bastille occurred which has never been fully explained. On February 11th, 1691/2, Luttrell records: 'Last letters from France say three English gentlemen Mr. Vanbrook, Mr. Goddard, and Mr. North were clapt up in the Bastille, suspected to be spyes.' On March 15th he refers to this again: 'French merchants were the other day sent to the Tower to be used as Mr. North and Mr. Vanbroke are

in the Bastille.' There is further, preserved in the British Museum, 'The humble Petition of Sir Dudley North', that one Bertelier, now in Newgate, be exchanged not for Van Brook alone, as intended, but for him and Sir Dudley's brother Montagu North, then in Toulon Castle.

To this event Vanbrugh himself referred in a letter of October, 1725, to Tonson in which he writes that the Duchess of Marlborough 'would like to throw me into an English Bastille to finish my days as I began them in a French one'. From this Disraeli and others have conjectured that Vanbrugh was born in the Bastille, but by the beginning of his days Vanbrugh clearly means only the beginning of his career; just as elsewhere he writes of marriage that it is 'fitter to end one's life with than begin it'.

Voltaire (*Letters in England*, XIX, On Comedy) refers to this episode thus :

Sir John having taken a tour into France before the glorious war that broke out in 1701 was thrown into the Bastille and detained there for some time, without ever being able to discover the motive which had prompted our ministry to indulge him with this mark of their distinction. He wrote a comedy during his confinement; and a circumstance which appears to me very extraordinary is that we don't meet with so much as a single satirical stroke against the country in which he had been so injuriously treated.



## § 3.

The comedy here referred to is *The Provoked Wife*, but though this may have been the first written, *The Relapse* was the first produced of his plays. This was acted at Drury Lane on December 26, 1696 and was very successful. Nearly a century later Sheridan rewrote it without improving it under the title of *A Trip to Scarbrough*. From now onwards we hear nothing of Vanbrugh as a soldier, much as a playwright, and a little later, as an architect.

Early in the following year *Aesop*, an adaptation from *Les Fables d'Esop*, by Boursault (1638—1701) appeared at Drury Lane, and to the rival theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields he gave *The Provoked Wife*. After this rapid unloading of his dramatic goods he remained curiously silent. Perhaps Collier's attack on the stage in general and his own work in particular checked his production. His next undertaking was a version of Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Pilgrim*, to which the great Dryden contributed a prologue. This appeared at Drury Lane in 1700. In 1702 appeared at the same theatre his version of *La Traicion busca y castiga* by Francisco de Rojas y Zorrilla, to which he was probably

introduced by Le Sage's translation (1700), *Le Traître Puni*. It is interesting to note that Dancourt, with whose work Vanbrugh was presently to make London familiar, also produced a version of this play, but not till 1707.

In 1704 we find Vanbrugh managing Lincoln's Inn Theatre and associated with Congreve in the production of an unsuccessful and unacknowledged version of Molière's *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*, acted under the title of *Squire Trelooby*. Next year he opened the Queen's Theatre, Haymarket, a house of his own designing, and here he produced his own version, improved in the rendering, of Dancourt's *Bourgeoises à la Mode* (1692). This is the play known even to the present generation of playgoers as *The Confederacy*, and with Mrs. Bracegirdle and Mrs. Barry and Booth, as Flippanta, Clarissa and Dick Amlet, its success was immediate. Another of Dancourt's plays, *The Country House* (*La Maison de Campagne*), was produced in the same year at Lincoln's Inn Fields, and a version of Molière's *Le Dépit*, entitled *The Mistake*, later at the Haymarket. But the Haymarket theatre proved a failure, its acoustics being bad, and Vanbrugh retired from the



management, apparently without serious loss of money. He had given £ 2000 for the site, so he wrote to Tonson in 1703, 'but have laid out such a scheme of matter that I shall be reimbursed every penny of it by the spare ground'.

His only remaining dramatic piece was the unfinished *A Journey to London*, which Colley Cibber, to whose *Love's Last Shift* his own first play, *The Relapse*, had been a sequel, completed, after its author's death, and produced with great success as *The Provok'd Husband*.

#### § 4.

Vanbrugh's career as a playwright overlaps his career as a soldier. His career as an architect overlaps his career as a playwright, but where he served his apprenticeship to that trade it is hard to imagine. The first reference to Vanbrugh in connection with architecture is his appointment as Controller of the Royal Works in 1702, a post to which he was reappointed in 1714, but he can hardly have received this appointment, even in those palmy days of political patronage, without some experience of the duties involved, and in 1703 he mentions that 200 men

are working on Castle Howard, one of his greatest undertakings. At the same time he was risking his own and his friends' money on his Haymarket playhouse, and he failed here not in his general architectural skill, but in his treatment of the particular problem of stage acoustics.

He became almost at once the most popular architect of the day. He built Whitton Hall for Sir Godfrey Kneller, who should have been something of a judge. He built Blenheim Palace, a terrible source of worry owing to the parsimonious temper of the Duchess Sarah. He built Old Claremont House, Esher, the Old Clarendon Buildings, Oxford, Greenwich Hospital, half a dozen great country houses, the elephantine church of St. John's, Westminster (a curious structure, not unjustly censured by Leigh Hunt), and several town and suburban houses for himself; one, the Bastille, at Blackheath, evidently named in remembrance of that early imprisonment to which reference has been made. He was knighted in 1714.

Vanbrugh's art has had less than justice done to it by the fame of the epigram (or at least the latter half of it) ascribed to one Abel Evans:



Lie heavy on him earth, for he  
Laid many a heavy load on thee.

If Van's buildings were, unlike his plays, heavy and ornate, they were usually imposing and the wits who remarked what splendid ruins they would make,\* were paying them the compliment of comparing them, perhaps unconsciously, with the great relics of classical antiquity. They were also, what his plays again in great part were not, original in design.

As a playwright Vanbrugh was a great wit and master of dramatic dialogue, applying his skilful technique to another man's outline. As an Architect he was a bold and wide-visioned artist building boldly to the neglect of a good deal of detail of which a more regular training might have supplied the knowledge, with, perhaps a corresponding loss of breadth and originality. Sir Joshua Reynolds praised Vanbrugh very highly, and it has been generally acknowledged by the critics of this art that in imagination and power of composition he ranks among the great archi-

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\* 'T is Vanbrug's structures that my fancy strike:  
Such noble ruins every pile would make,  
I wish they'd tumble for the prospect's sake.

*The Man of Taste* (by the Rev. Mr. Bramston).  
Dodsley's *Miscellany*, I. p. 290.

pects of his nation. He had moreover one quality which many have lacked, reverence for the product of earlier ages. He regretted the destruction of the 200 year old gate of Whitehall and suggested an alternative carriageway through 'the Privy Garden', and on another occasion he deplored the Duke of Rutland's 'improvement' to his house.

§ 5.

Van was a prominent and well-liked personage in the London of his day, and less of a politician than most of his fellow men of letters. He was, in particular, intimate with Congreve, Walsh, Steele, and Nicholas Rowe, the poet laureate, whose *Reconcilement between Jacob Tonson and Mr. Congreve* makes the publisher speak thus of his talented friend :

I'm in with Captain Vanbrugh at the present,  
 A most sweet-natured gentleman and pleasant.  
 He writes your Comedies, draws Schemes and Models  
 And builds Dukes' houses upon very odd hills!  
 For him, so much I dote on him, that I  
 (If I were sure to go to heaven!) would die!

What if from Van's dear arms I should retire  
 And warm once more my 'bunnians' at your fire!  
 If I to Bow Street should invite you home,  
 And set a bed up in my dining room;  
 Tell me, dear Mr. Congreve! would you come?



All these were Whigs and, among the politicians, Walpole was a close friend. On the other side, Pope at least treated him civilly and complimented him. Even his satirical lines on Blenheim, which he concludes by declaring 'a house and not a dwelling', give praise where praise is due and are fairer criticism than Pope always cared to express. Swift is said to have disapproved of the morality of Van's plays, which was very absurd of him, for it is no less and the decency rather more than a good many of the lucubrations of himself and his fellow Scribblers can boast.

Both Queen Anne, who paid, while she lived, for the building of Blenheim, and King George, who did not, favoured him, and he had many patrons and friends among the nobility. The Earl of Carlisle, in particular, was both. It was through him that Vanbrugh was appointed Clarencieux King-of-Arms, and should, had not Sir John Anstis got ahead of him, have been Garter. With the Duke of Newcastle he was on sufficiently intimate terms to advise him on his marriage. The bride had the misfortune to be Duchess Sarah's grand-daughter; but fortunately he could write of her that she,

I do not think has one grain of this wicked woman's temper in her: if I did I would not advise you to take her tho' with the alloy of a million.

Newcastle shares with Tonson the position of Vanbrugh's chief correspondent. A little later (January, 1718/19) he writes to Newcastle announcing his own marriage and refers in characteristic manner to Tonson, who was one of those amiable people on whom his friends delighted to inflict gentle chaff:

Jacob will be frightened out of his wits and his religion too when he hears I'm gone at last. If he's still in France he'll certainly give himself to God, for fear he shou'd now be ravish'd by a gentlewoman. I was the last man left between him and ruin.

This was evidently a standing jest regarding Tonson. Six months later he adds a postscript to a letter to Newcastle:

I have just now an account that a gentleman newly arrived from Paris actually saw friend Jacob in a frock.

In his next letter he contradicts this rumour, adding that Jacob, *if he sells now* stands to make a thousand pounds profit from his purchase 'in the new company'. But we have no reason to suppose he did sell now, any more than Johnny Gay, who lost the prospect of twice as much in this same South Sea Bubble.



Vanbrugh had hitherto been a good club-man, a member of the Kit-cat club and also of 'the Tate a Tate club at the Hercules Pillars House in High Holborn', at which on one occasion 'there was stinking fish and stale cold lamb for supper, with divers liquors made of malt in an execrable manner.' But at last in January 1718/19 he was to marry Mistress Henrietta Maria, eldest child of James Yarburgh, Esquire, Colonel of Foot Guards, of Snaith Hall, Yorks. In connection with this marriage there is another problem not certainly solved, for as early as 1710 we have a description of his courting from the lively pen of Lady Mary Wortley Montague (then Lady Mary Pierrepont), a letter which led Leigh Hunt to date the actual marriage 1710.

You know (she writes) Van's taste was always odd; his inclination to ruins has given him a fancy for Mrs. Yarborough: he sighs and ogles so that it would do your heart good to see him.

Lady Mary was then 18, Henrietta Yarburgh, having been born in 1693, would be 17. Why then 'ruins'? And why the eight years delay in marrying? Mr. Swain, the 'Mermaid' editor, suggested that Van eventually married a younger sister, but Henrietta is said to

have been the eldest child, and in any case one would expect some other reference to this curious development. Either Lady Mary was not referring to the lady's age but merely signifying that she did not approve of her looks, or there is something wrong with the recorded facts. It is hardly possible that it can be Henrietta's mother for whom Van had a *penchant*.\*

In August, 1719, their first child was born, 'a bit of a girl popping into the world three months before its time. And the business is all to do over again', as he wrote to Newcastle.

In spite of his opinion, quoted above, that marriage was best left till late, and in spite of the bad example which so many of his own stage creations had set him, Vanbrugh seems to have had a happy and successful married life. 'I have a good humoured wife,' he writes to Tonson in Paris in November 1719, 'a quiet house and find myself as much disposed to be a friend and servant to a good old acquaintance as ever.' Lady Vanbrugh, he adds, is ready to find Tonson a wife; 'she has not a sister for you but she knows them that have.' He then says he and his wife will come to dinner, and

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\* *The Genealogist*, (1878). Vol. 2, pp. 237—40.



Lady Vanbrugh shows that she was at any rate not quite devoid of humour by adding to her husband's letter, 'and if you will make one at cards as I understand you have often done with much finer ladies than I am, I give you my word that I will neither cheat or wrangle. Yr. servt. Hariot V.'

A good many of Vanbrugh's letters of this period are extant, and one of August 8th, 1721, to Newcastle is worth quoting as a specimen of Van's epistolary style :

I was at York all last week. A race every day and a ball every night with as much well look't company as I ever saw got together. The ladys, I mean, in chief. As to the men, the D. of Whar-ton was the top gallant. The entertainments ending on Friday, he declared, if the company would stay in towne one day more, he wou'd treat the jockeys with a plate, the Ladys with a ball, and all together with a supper. 'T was done accordingly, and my Lady Milner who had all along been his partner, was now his queen. When supper was ended he invited all the good company to meet him again that day 12 months on the same terms, with many decent and good compliments to the inhabitants of York and Yorkshire for the Honour they did him and hop't 't would do him again. To which they gratefully bowed as who would say, yes. But his grace then bethought him of one civil thing more and said it, "That unless my lady Milner would absolutely engage to be there too he was off, as to the rest of the company." Upon which she look'd she did not know how and all went home to sleep.

Later letters to Tonson contain much entertaining gossip about his own Haymarket projects, the Duke of Newcastle and his guests, the boom in South Sea stock, wherein his brother held £8000, Steele's quarrel with the Lord Chamberlain consequent on his grant of a theatrical license to Wilkes, Cibber and Booth, the Duchess of Marlborough's will, with unmeasured abuse of the Duchess ('D— the Duchess!'), Congreve, gifts of cider from Herefordshire ('Have a care . . . . . some Herefordshire nymph will bounce upon your heart from under an apple tree') and the announcement that he is now 'two boys strong in the nursery'.

This was in June, 1722. Three years later, in August, 1725, Van is again grateful for some 'rare good cider' and describes how, on his way to Castle Howard, he and Lady Vanbrugh passed through Woodstock and were excluded from Blenheim, which their companions visited, by the Duchess's express orders. He goes on:

You may believe me when I tell you you were often talked of both during the journey and at Stowe and our former Kit-cat days remembered with pleasure. We were one night reckoning who were left behind and both Ld. Carlisle and Ld.



Cobham express a great desire of having one meeting next winter if you came to town, not as a club but old friends that have been a club and the best club that ever met.

Later in that year he sold his post as Clarendieux and writes to Tonson again abusing the Duchess and saying that he hopes for Walpole's aid against her attempt to saddle him with the liability for the building costs of Blenheim.

He died on March 26 of the following year, 1726, at his house in Scotland Yard and was buried in St. Stephen's, Walbrook. His son Charles became ensign in the Coldstream Guards and died of wounds received at Fontenoy. Horace Walpole, writing to Mann, quotes a letter from Joseph Yorke describing his death and how he routed a whole French battalion. Another son is named in the will of Lady Vanbrugh, who died in 1775.

#### § 6.

The fame of the architect has never equalled that of the man of letters, and even Macaulay's schoolboy hardly knows the names of more than three of our great architects of the past. If Vanbrugh's is one of them, it is to the fact that he wrote plays that the distinction is due.

Voltaire, in the essay already quoted, correctly indicates Vanbrugh's crowning, all-sufficing virtue:

His comedies are more humorous than those of Mr. Wycherley but not so ingenious . . . . . Mr. Congreve's comedies are the most witty and regular, those of Sir John Vanbrugh most gay and humorous.

For the intrigue, or plot, of his pieces he cared little. In point of fact this element is usually provided for him by his French originals. In the case of *The Relapse*, it is in part prescribed by the task he had set himself of providing a sequel to Cibber's play. Only *The Provok'd Wife*, of which the plot is of a common Restoration type, and the unfinished *A Journey to London* are, as far as we know, of wholly independent design.

It is usual to compare Vanbrugh with Congreve, an easy but unfair proceeding, when undertaken by professed admirers of Congreve. For he aimed at none of his friend's intellectual subtlety and brilliant phrasing, while he had qualities of his own which Congreve neither had nor needed. Congreve is a wit, Vanbrugh a humorist. Congreve achieved Meredith's ideal of comedy, a mirthless, intellectual exercise. Vanbrugh's are to these almost farces, cheerful presen-



tations of the foibles of the characters of the time, the city madam and her skin-flint husband, the profligate young rascal of fashion, the new-made peer, the vulgar and loquacious old nurse. Of the two Vanbrugh, for all his foreign extraction and his foreign models, strikes us as the more typically English. His characters are nearer akin to Juliet's nurse, to Falstaff; Congreve's to Volpone, to Tartuffe.

As a translator Vanbrugh is unsurpassed. His dialogue is the most natural and racy that ever was, yet the greater part of it is faithfully taken over from his original. He gives it a liveliness, an ebullience, a dramatic vigour, which make his characters among the most original and vivid on our stage. In this respect *The Confederacy* is the most successful, yet this play is quite a close adaptation of Dancourt. *Les Bourgeoises à la mode* is a good play, *The Confederacy* is a better. Vanbrugh's embellishments, here a little and there a little, emphasize the humour without overstating it, and give colour to Dancourt's neatly sketched but rather monotonous characters. Take at random a speech of Corinna, the enterprising young miss, not yet out of the schoolroom—

a polite version of the inimitable Hoyden in *The Relapse*. Here is Dancourt's original:

*Mariane*—Je ne suis pas à plaindre! Est-il agréable à mon âge de vivre éternellement dans la solitude? Je n'ai pour toute compagnie que des maîtres qui ne m'apprennent que des choses inutiles, la musique, la fable, l'histoire, la géographie, cela n'est-il pas bien divertissant?

*Lisette*—Cela vous donne de l'esprit.

*Mariane*—N'en ai-je pas assez? Ma belle-mère ne sait point toutes ces choses, et elle vit heureuse.

(*Les B. à la M. II, vii.*)

Here is Vanbrugh's rendering:

*Corinna*—Not pity'd! Why, is it not a miserable thing, such a young creature as I am shou'd be kept in perpetual solitude, with no other company but a parcel of old funbling masters, to teach me geography, arithmetic, philosophy, and a thousand things? Fine entertainment, indeed, for a young maid at sixteen! methinks one's time might be better employed.

*Flippanta*—These things will improve your wit.

*Marianna*—Fiddle, faddle; ha'n't I wit enough already? My mother-in-law has learn'd none of this trumpery, and is not she as happy as the day is long?

Vanbrugh has a perpetual flow of high spirits, yet he never allows himself to exaggerate or to overdo his fun. He keeps his scenes proportionate to the whole and never encourages his comedians to settle down to a knock-about scene regardless of the rest of the caste, after the fashion of the modern



purveyor of light comedy. His plays abound in essentially comic situations: Brass blackmailing his fellow rogue by threatening merely to talk with an indiscreet loudness; the garrison of Sir Tunbelly's house locking up Miss Hoyden ('let loose' is the delightful term used for the contrary operation) and getting ready their blunderbuses when young Fashion comes a-wooing, and a little later accommodating the true and noble bridegroom in the dog-kennel; Sir John Brute, in disguise, brought before the magistrate; the Headpiece family arriving in full force in London. Vanbrugh brings out the comical incongruity of such scenes, but he never repeats himself and carries his action on before familiarity has staled the humour of the situation.

His characters are painted boldly, distinctively and humorously. He is an acute observer, and hits off a likeness in a flash. For psychological analyses he cares no more than Corinna would, though like all artists he has many intuitions of which he is perhaps no better aware than was M. Jourdain of his prose-speaking faculty.

Unlike Congreve he depicts men better than women. His *Berinthia* and *Amanda*,

Belinda and Araminta are not to be compared with Millamant or Lady Wishfort or Angelica. But Lord Foppington, who found life 'an eternal round O of delight', Brass and Dick Amlet, even the unpleasant and sardonic figure of Sir John Brute, and with them we may set those females of a different, non-drawing room type, Mrs. Amlett, and Hoyden and her nurse, these are characters whose personality comes home to us so that they remain for ever in the portrait gallery of our memory and so enjoy immortality among the creatures of fiction.

§ 7.

It is impossible to write of any of the so-called 'Restoration' dramatists without touching on the vexed question of stage morality. The society of the age was in matters of sex singularly lacking in what we call decency, though it might be more exact to call it secretiveness or reticence. Anybody with sufficient wit to write a successful play must have been sensible of these shortcomings. But the playwright was not a Don Quixote prepared to assume that things were what they notoriously were not. The society depicted was the conventional society of the



age, with, of course, a disproportionate prominence given to the more scandalous aspects of it. Scenes of domestic bliss were doubtless common enough, but they do not lend themselves to dramatic treatment and the cause of morality would not be served by their presentation. Hardly any dramatist, certainly not Vanbrugh, expressed any admiration for this state of things; very often he specifically condemned it. If an immoral act had a dramatic value he suffered it to happen. Vanbrugh in the main plot of *The Relapse* offended flagrantly, it is said, in employing a scene of frank seduction. Do you agree? Do you think on seeing this scene or reading it that he has offended? Very well then, he has shown that seduction is an offensive act. If this sort of thing excites evil passions, at least it leaves us under no delusion as to the immorality of the act. The Puritan logically objected to all stage love making, because he realised that watching a man make love on the boards to his own wife brought the spectator, in his or her sympathy for the wooer or the wooed, perilously near to adultery. From any such insidious provocation to sexual excitement, at least, such scenes were free. Our conven-

tional moral instincts are roused to check those amorous propensities which beset even the sturdy Doctor Johnson, when he visited his friend and pupil's playhouse. But Vanbrugh was not writing 'problem' plays. The scene I have referred to is only an incident in a plot of quite conventional intrigue. Collier was perfectly right in disliking the contemporary play, but it was not the playwrights who were misleading society but society which almost inevitably gave unpleasant colour to a stage which, being true to art and therefore truly related to life, had to conform in externals to a lax moral code. The method of the drama is not, as Lamb protested, realistic, it does not seek to delude the spectator into thinking he is looking at anything else than a make-believe; but comedy, however imaginative and intellectual the structure it rears, must rest on a basis of what men really say and do. In the next reign the vices of society were more decorously veiled, but the sentimental and virtuous comedy of Steele lacked the great essential of comedy—sincerity, or, what amounts to the same thing, the frank recognition of its own insincerity. Till men really are good, and not merely trying to be,



a comedy which does not somewhere show the cloven hoof can never wholly please the honest, adult mind.

For Van himself we may fairly ask that he shall be remembered as he was in private life, a gentleman according to the best standards of his day—a loyal and genial friend, an affectionate and dutiful husband, and a man who contributed as much as any man then living to the cheerfulness and comeliness of England. It is with this knowledge of their author's private character that the plays should be read, and it will be seen how purely dramatic are those lines in which, in the words of an old critic, he appears to seek 'to dissuade from chaste love and to recommend by every prurient device the most complete dissoluteness of morals and manners.' Morals which will not withstand the hearing of Heartfree's wooing of Belinda are a poor passport to heaven! This same critic admits that *Æsop* and *The False Friend* 'evince that he possessed right moral feelings and that they were only perverted on sexual topics by the profligacy of the times.' In truth there is no better ground for convicting Vanbrugh of immorality on the score of actions performed by his characters than

there is for convicting Aeschylus of matricide, or Sophocles of incest, or Shakespeare of wife-murder.

Vanbrugh resembles Fielding (who much esteemed his comedy). He knew men's frailties and deplored them, but he did not blink those faults, neither was he prepared to damn his five good parts for the sake of his one even flagrantly bad one. There is much charity towards men and women in the words he puts into the mouth of Berinthia (in *The Relapse*), a young woman by no means immaculate, but not the heroine, that rôle being filled by the triumphantly virtuous Amanda:

Well, there's nothing upon earth astonishes me less when I consider what they and we are compos'd of. For nature has made them children, and us babies.



## JOHN GAY.

### § 1.

JOHNNY GAY is not and never has been looked upon as in the first rank of English poets. Nobody coming blithely home carolling snatches from *The Beggar's Opera*, as all London has at some time done under both the first and the fifth George, has thought of what he has just heard as the work of a great poet. Yet Gay has never lacked his readers and his lovers, and his poetic gifts were of such a quality as should make their possessor's art a thing of real and permanent value.

But Gay had in him, along with a rare talent, fatal defects of character, and circumstances unhappily favoured the development of his inferior qualities. Everybody who knew him loved Johnny, and it is hard to speak evil of so amiable a creature, but

Courthope, no prejudiced witness against any of the Augustans, has described him as 'greedy, indolent and ostentatious'. He wanted applause, he wanted ease—a warm, cosy place in the fashionable world. On the whole he got what he wanted; had it not been for the South Sea bubble he might have died a rich man; as it was he never suffered from not being one, though the frustrated expectation made him rather querulous. But for this mess of pottage he sacrificed his birthright, his kinship with Herrick and with Burns as a singer of country joys and the natural beauty of the world :

No more I'll sing Buxonia brown  
Like goldfinch in her Sunday gown

But Landsdown fresh as flower of May  
And Berkeley lady blithe and gay.

and Anglesey and Hyde and Montague. Thus he became the third of the trio of poets among the Brothers, who frequented Ozinda's chocolate house in St. James's Street, instead of singing the songs of his native Devon\*.

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\* Leigh Hunt refers to him as "the good-hearted, the natural man in the midst of the sophisticate". In both, perhaps, there was something of the qualities of a Boythorne.



## § 2.

Gay was born at Barnstaple and baptised there on September 16, 1685, the year of Sedgemoor. He was educated at the local Grammar School, along with William Fortescue, afterwards Master of the Rolls, legal advisor to the Scriberlus Club, and author of that amusing skit *Stradlyng v. Stiles*, and with Pope's friend Aaron Hill. He was apprenticed to a silk-mercator of London, but is said to have disliked trade and won an early return to Barnstaple. Nevertheless, he must have gone back to London very soon, probably before the publication, in 1708, of his first poem *Wine*, in which he imitates John Phillip's *Cider* (1706). He was now a diligent reader of the great periodical literature of the day, frequenting, we may presume, the coffee-houses for whose *habitués* it was designed. In 1711 he produced a pamphlet discussing the chief newspapers, notably *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* on the one side, and *The Examiner* on the other. He adroitly contrived to win the favour of both the rival editors, Steele and Swift, and a little later of Pope; and this led to his undertaking, to order, his *Shepherd's Week*, a counterblast to Ambrose (Namby-Pampy) Phillips' *Pasto-*

*ralis*. Here Gay's natural genius for 'country sentiment' was sufficiently subdued to permit him to please his town-bred audience, and he was henceforward one of the most applauded members of the Harley-Bolingbroke-Pope-Swift *coterie*, sharing in their political spoils and, in no long time, in their political disgrace.

The earliest notable fruit of this association was "*The What D'Ye Call It*", a Tragi-Comi-Pastoral Farce, which first won the plaudits of the town in the early days of 1715. In 1717 he joined Pope and Arbuthnot in another farce, *Three Hours after Marriage*, a piece of less merit than might have seemed possible were coalitions less notoriously unsuccessful. In 1716 appeared his *Trivia*, wherein he applies to London his great powers of observation and of description in verse. Four years later he published a collection in two handsome folio volumes of his poems, in which were included, in addition to the pieces mentioned, such other occasional poems as he had from time to time composed. His profits from this publication, amounting to over £1000, were lost in the pricking of the South Sea Bubble. There was, however, more than one Mæcenas in that age



ready to befriend so fashionable a poet, and even the Whigs seem to have had a weakness for Johnny. He held a post as Lottery Commissioner, worth £150 a year, from 1722 to 1731, in spite of his supposed activity as a political satirist.

Meanwhile he wrote another play, *The Captives*, and in 1727 published his *Fables*, dedicated to the young Duke of Cumberland, whose tutor he now was. Then in 1728, after a long incubation, appeared the famous *Beggar's Opera*, which was followed by a far inferior sequel, *Polly*, the publication of which was made immensely profitable by its suppression, for political reasons, on the stage. The Duchess of Queenberry offended ministers by her ardent championship of Gay and his prohibited opera, and was banished from court in consequence. Under her protection, and the Duke's, Gay lived at Amesbury till his death on December 4, 1732. Two days before Christmas he was buried in Westminster Abbey, in Poets' corner.

### § 3.

In the age that immediately succeeded his own Gay was held in repute chiefly as a fabulist. Later, when naturalism became the

fashion, critics extolled Gay as a truthful delineator, in an artificial age, of the scenes and customs of real England. In both respects Gay's greatness is at best only comparative. In the one case he achieved success in a form where verse competes on no more than equal terms with prose. In the second he writes well enough only to tantalize us that he should not have written more and better. His few wild-flowers star the trim verdure of the Popian lawn. They would not take the eye growing in the woodlands and meadows of other districts.

But in a third province, where his contemporary fame, though great, was not due so much to his literary merit as to topical, social and scandalous considerations, a recent revival, following on a long earlier stage career, has proved the high, positive value of Gay's work. *The Beggar's Opera* owes much to its music, fuller than any Opera before or since of pure, graceful airs, springs of melody, sweet and untainted by false sentiment or affectations of technique. To our own age this came as a revelation, and the unmusical and the expert alike joined in praising and enjoying this rediscovery of



a forgotten mode of art. 'What a joy it was,' wrote a poet critic.\*

'What a joy it was to hear English music once more! . . . . the music of the English soil, so noble, so gay, so debonair, so beautiful. The music that grew in England like wayside flowers, of which Purcell wove garlands, which the cavalier soldiers put in their velvet hats, and the soldiers of the Georges wore as a cockade or flung to the girls they left behind them; flowers which were neglected for many years until Sullivan planted his rollicking border.'

To these airs Gay wedded words which never occasion the poetic thrill, but are always comely and neat. No one with an ear for this kind of thing can fail to note the superiority of the phrasing and rhythm of these lyrics over those of the ordinary opera. Sung by a singer who has thoughts for something better than the mechanism of his own voice, it is a pleasure to hear the natural and tripping sentences of Gay's witty, dainty muse. If the music suggests to Mr. Baring the name of Sullivan, the neatness of the rhymes, never sating with excessive ingenuity, suggests Gilbert. And as in that famous Victorian partnership, it is the absolute fitness of this marriage of words and tune that so notably satisfies the ear and

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\* Maurice Baring in "*The London Mercury*."

the mind. Anybody who remembers the words will remember the numbers, and *vice versa*. The one inevitably suggests the other. In some cases, of course, the association is traditional; Gay introduces into his own lyric the old refrain—'Over the hills and far away', for example; in others he achieves as much success with his own material, as in this unpretentious little song:

Before the barndoor crowing,  
The cock by hens attended,  
His eyes around him throwing,  
Stands for a while suspended.  
Then one he singles from the crew,  
And cheers the happy hen  
With how do you do, and how do you do,  
And how do you do again.

#### § 4.

But it is not by reason of its lyrics that the reader will prize *The Beggar's Opera*. It is a comedy, very light, but of most rare and admirable quality. The irony of it is so keen and so excellently sustained that we are not surprised to learn that it was Swift, the master ironist of our literature, who in 1721, first suggested the theme of a Newgate pastoral, and we suspect that he had more than one finger in the piece. Assume the moral premisses of Macheath and Jem Twit-



cher and the piece proceeds to as logical an unfolding of an edifying plot as any sentimental romance. The resemblance to Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* (about 15 years younger) is obvious and plainly not due to accident. The motives of the play are indicated, better than by any epitome of the plot, by some of the 'characteristics', quoted from the text of the play, which worthy John Bell set on the title page of his edition:

'Tis but fitting we should protect and encourage cheats, since we live by 'em.

Let Betty Sly know that I'll save her from transportation, for I can get more by her staying in England.

*Peachum.*

Any private dispute of mine shall be of no ill consequence to my friends.

I love the sex, and a man who loves money might as well be contented with one guinea as I with one woman.

*Macheath.*

Pox take the tailors for making the fobs so deep and narrow!

I would not willingly forfeit my honour by betraying any body.

*Filch.*

Why are the laws levelled at us? are we more dishonest than the rest of mankind? What we win, gentlemen, is our own by the law of arms and the right of conquest.

*Jemmy Twitcher.*

Of tried courage and indefatigable industry.

*Robin of Bagshot.*

Away, hussy, hang your husband and be dutiful.

*Mr. Peachum.*

What, murder the man I love! The blood runs cold at the very thought of it.

*Polly.*

Had'st thou been hanged five months ago I had been happy—for I love thee so that I could sooner bear to see thee hanged than in the arms of another.

*Lucy Lockitt.*

From these sentences the ingenious may deduce the trend of the whole. All the characters are vicious and fit denizens of Newgate. But the professed criminals have wit, courage, and generosity, and observe honour among thieves. The gaoler and those who have evaded the law have no redeeming qualities. But are we shocked at the immoral proceedings which the play sets before our eyes? Not at all, not the most rigid moralist among us. Not a word is spoken in praise of true virtue, and breaches of all the ten commandments are acquiesced in without any apparent demur by this scandalous author. Yet we laugh at the broad humour and clever irony and feel no incongruity in the wedding of this rakish libretto with that gay and innocent music.

How is this? There are, I think, two answers. Most people may be appeased with the first and will not require a second. But some self-tormenting souls will.

The first is the old defence put forward by Charles Lamb on behalf of Restoration comedy—the absence of any sense of illus-



ion; and it is a far better defence in Gay's case, for his comedy presents a society quite unlike any that any audience that mattered could possibly feel at home in, so as to find in its behaviour examples, good or bad, for its own conduct. The cynical immorality of Wycherley's or Congreve's beaux and belles might mislead: no one could possibly be instigated to petty larceny by Filch or to polygamy by Macheath. We admire the gallant, swaggering Macheath, pretty, amorous Polly, and Macheath's tattered and roistering band. We do not think of their moral standards, these are reprehensibly low, but they are taken for granted—forgotten, so long as they are constant, as these, with no truly virtuous characters in the play, are. The thing is frankly artifice, and the alleged author is brought on the stage at either end to make sure we shall not forget it. 'In this kind of drama', remarks the Beggar, in an apology for the happy ending, 'by request', 'tis no matter how absurdly things are brought about'.

But for those who positively refuse to allow themselves to consider anything divorced from its moral bearings, there is a further consideration. In all art the range

of light and shade is never so wide as in nature. It suffices if the gradations are kept apparently to scale. This, within Rembrandt-*esque* limits, Gay achieves. All his characters are decidedly *subfusc*, for even our dear Polly has not, we fear, been greatly careful of her virtue when her heart has been touched, and is not above living on the fruits of her highwayman husband's industry. But from Polly downwards the characters sink to such Stygian depths of blackness that the virtues of the 'good' shine with a beautiful lustre, smutched and spotted though they really be. Moreover, Gay is careful, in the person of his Beggar, to remind us that the whole thing may fittingly be transposed to a higher key :

'Through the whole Piece you may observe such a similitude of manners in high and low life that it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable vices) the fine gentlemen imitate the gentlemen of the road, or the gentlemen of the road the fine gentlemen. Had the Play remained as I at first intended, it would have carried a most excellent moral; 't would have shewn that the lower sort of people have their vices in a degree as well as the rich, and that they are punished for them.'

The austere moralist may claim that all human character is so immeasurably short of perfection that whether we place our hero



a few rungs higher or lower on the ladder of moral progress matters not, so long as the relative degrees are observed. Absolutely we may not call any man good. By comparison, Macbeath and Peachum are as Orlando and Ganelon.

### § 5.

It was the political allegory which, with very little reason that the modern eye can detect, was read into the play that made its production so great a social success. A few hits at lawyers and politicians there are, but no one reading the play today, still less seeing it played, would associate Macheath with the Prime Minister. The truth is that literature under the patronage system was so inevitably connected with politics that for a Tory poet or playwright to score a success was in itself a blow to the Whigs, even though the success might be achieved by something as remote from politics as a pastoral poem, a translation of Homer, or an edition of Shakespeare. Swift and his fellows of the Scriblerus Club were marked men. Just as a professed wit, it is said, has only to ask for the salt to raise a roar of laughter, so these

writers had only to produce a play to set the politicians talking.\*

In the case of *Polly* this procedure was carried to the height of absurdity. *Polly* is a sequel to *The Beggar's Opera* and sadly inferior to that brilliant piece. Macheath, transported to Virginia, turns pirate and heads a war against the planters and the Indians. For love of Jenny Diver, his betrayer in the original play, and to evade his other loves, he disappears as Macheath and reappears as Morano, a coloured gentleman and a born pirate-king. To them enter Polly, heiress of the lately hanged Peachum, in search of her husband. However, true virtue, in the untutor'd mind of a poor Indian, Caw-waukee, now appears, and in the end Macheath is killed and Polly wedded, *en secondes noces*, to this gallant prince. Again there are a few passing references to political corruption and a certain amount of satire at the expense of the militia. But the ministry, remembering the success of *The Beggar's Opera*, was afraid of what the critics of the coffee-houses and drawing-

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\* Addison's *Cato*, it will be remembered, had been used as the occasion for a demonstration by both parties, each interpreting it according to its own principles.



rooms might make of it. In itself it might appear harmless enough, but who could foresee what the perverse ingenuity of the Tory wits might not read into it—and aloud. So they forbade the stage performance of the piece; and thereby made the fortune of the printed book and of its author.

This fortune went lightly and was lightly won. *Polly* is not worthy of the adorable Miss Peachum's name. The introduction of true virtue in the person of Cawwaukee, stage figure though he is, disturbs the scale of moral values. Macheath becomes a tawdry and sordid ruffian, Polly a sentimental young person. The gibes at the rich, instead of being implied in the allegory, are expressed in the portrayal of Mr. Ducat. So lamentable is the falling off, particularly in the irony, that it is hard not to suspect that there is to all intents and purposes a change of authorship, that Gay is now the sole cook, whereas before the dish had owed its flavour to that *cordón blue*, the Dean of St. Patrick's, now (1728) in Ireland.

#### § 6.

Gay's third opera is pretty generally ignored, but it is (leaving the music out of

the question) not only a much better piece than *Polly*, but possesses features of particular interest. *Achilles* is a kind of heroic comedy, of a type for which Gay in the Prologue claims the merit of novelty. The claim is just. There is not, I think, any play of this kind which Gay is likely to have known, though the comic treatment of heroic figures is characteristic of the earlier English drama and there are obvious points of resemblance to Lyly's court comedy.

The scene is the court of Lycomedes, king of Scyros, where Achilles, under the name of Pyrrha and in the guise of a maiden, has been placed by his mother, Thetis, to save him from the doom that awaits him on the plains of Ilium. Lycomedes is enamoured of the supposed Pyrrha and woos her first by proxy and then in person. Achilles checks their advance with Homeric vigour. Meanwhile Queen Theaspe, not unreasonably jealous of her husband, has set her daughter, Deidamia, in closest intimacy with Pyrrha so as to make sure the amorous king shall have no chance of access to his fair guest. She also plans to marry Pyrrha to her nephew Periphas, who has no wish to marry, and thereby involves him in a quarrel with



that mighty man of valour Ajax, who has come to collect the Scyrian levies and has also fallen a victim to the beauty of the hope of Hellas. Finally, in faithful accordance with the old legend, Ulysses and Diomedes arrive, disguised as merchants, and by exposing, amid the bales of women's fairings, a soldier's habiliments makes 'that careless creature Pyrrha who hath not once thought of her clothes' bewray herself. Achilles, torn between Ares and Aphrodite, weds Deidamia, and then follows the drums and trumpets to the field. Ulysses, who has the last word, withdraws to the tune of a 'Saraband of Corelli'.

This is an amusing plot, handled with admirable propriety, and the dialogue is easy and witty. It is a slight piece, playing only on the surface with the foibles of humanity and the humours of artificial situations. But of its kind it is good and coming from an age which produced hardly a comedy worthy of the name, after Farquhar and before Colman, it deserves higher praise than it has received. It succeeded on the stage at its first appearance and may be read today with a good deal of pleasure.

## § 7.

A brief tribute is also due to one of Gay's earlier dramatic pieces, which, though not an opera, might to a discerning eye have marked Gay down as a skilful writer of light libretto. This is *The What D'Ye Call It*, a trifling confection, a mere matter of some hour's traffic of the stage, but one that needed a light hand. It is a proof of the genuine wit of the piece that such a production, a skit on the dramatic modes of the day, should have retained its stage popularity even beyond its models' vogue, and should even today be a most readable little play. The plot is quite absurd, but not more than befits burlesque; the dialogue is lively and pointed, and the only lyric, with its neatly handled feminine (or dissyllabic) rhymes, is one of the most tuneful set of verses of the age:—

The merchant, rob'd of pleasure,  
 Sees tempests in despair;  
 But what's the loss of treasure  
 To losing of my dear?  
 Should you some coast be laid on  
 Where gold and di'monds grow,  
 You'd find a richer maiden,  
 But none that loves you so.

We may believe that Gay's was the main hand in the elaboration of this piece, albeit



Cibber appears disposed to give Pope that credit. Certainly in this song sounds the authentic note of *The Beggar's Opera*, and the cheerful irresponsibility of the whole is such as we especially associate with Gay. Steele is said to have seen in the play, to his indignation, an irreverend mockery of Addison's solemn tragedy of *Cato*; others, after the fashion of the age, professed to discern in it a satire on the late war. These things are a measure of the author's (or authors') success in provoking the interest of the town; they afford no indication of the real temper of the piece.

§ 8.

Gay's non-dramatic work has received more attention and needs less. Its qualities, good and bad, are evident. He could write smoothly and aptly about pretty nearly anything. But he never achieved the pithiness or the grace of Mat. Prior, or the brilliant, though sometimes immodest, wit and realism of Swift. As for Pope, Gay's verse seems thin and crude beside the rich and mellow honey of his utterance. A knowledge of nature Gay certainly had, but it may be doubted if he had much feeling for it. He was

ashamed of the scent of hay that now and then entered the chambers of his poetry, and would apologize for it, proceeding to speak slightly of 'dung-heaps.' His rural knowledge served to expose the artificialities of his rival, but he does not for all that allow it to be his own inspiration. His country Muse sings to him her artless and beautiful melodies, and he does but use her to amuse his fine, scornful friends of the Town, himself joining in their mockery.

*Rural Sports*, in which Gay shows a very accurate knowledge of his subject (particularly of angling), is by far the best of his country pieces. But he writes very neatly, and his verses amuse by a kind of quaint solemnity:

Ah, Bouzybee, why did'st thou stay so long?  
The mugs were large, the drink was wondrous strong!  
Thou should'st have left the fair before 't was light,  
But thou sat'st toping till the morning light.

It is this, together with a remarkably keen eye for the humours of London streets, that makes his *Trivia* a poem of real distinction. There is no poem in the language of quite this type. There are no scenes in it so vivid as Swift's *City Shower*, but even in prose so droll and so truthful a description of the sights and ways of London would be



worth having. Gay's pleasant, quizzical, easy-paced verse makes it more memorable and more pointed.

Experienced men, inured to city ways,  
Need not the Calendar to count their days.  
When through the town with slow and solemn air,  
Led by the nostril, walks the muzzled bear;  
Behind him moves majestically dull,  
The pride of Hockley-hole, the surly bull;  
Learn hence the periods of the week to name;  
Mondays and Thursdays are the days of game.

How wise, to this day, is such advice as this, and how simply yet distinctly phrased :

When waggish boys the stunted besom ply  
To rid the shabby pavement: pass not by  
Ere thou hast held their hands; some heedless flirt  
Will over-spread thy calves with spattering dirt.  
Where porters hogsheads roll from carts aslope,  
Or brewers down steep cellars stretch the rope,  
Where counted billets are by carmen toss'd,  
Stay thy rash step, and walk without the post.

In the *Fables*, Gay's command of easy versification is fully displayed and his moral is plain and salutary. More than this cannot be said for these once famous pieces. They lack both the racy wit of the folk-lore fable, and the shrewd humour of Chaucer's brilliant study of galline psychology, the Nonne Preste's Tale of Chanticleer and Pertelote. Gay's animals are conventional and the stories decidedly dull. He is out to edify, and his lively verse and neat phrasing can-

not give his apologues that pith and point which the mode requires. In the second book the satire is almost wholly political and not at all impressive. Too often instead of getting to work on his story Gay begins with a moral harangue in such pedantic strain as this :

We frequently misplace esteem  
 By judging men by what they seem.  
 To birth, wealth, power, we should allow  
 Precedence and our lowest bow:  
 In that is due distinction shown:  
 Esteem is virtue's right alone.

The mild zeugma in the fourth line is the only glimmer of wittiness in style here, and such passages remind us only too forcibly of later examples of the species to which, after all, these *Fables* of Gay's belong by origin, the moral poem for children.

Finally, let us praise that charming ballad, doubly welcome from an age when ballads were infrequent, *Sweet William's Lament to Black-eyed Susan*. Nothing else of Gay's belongs to this class or possesses quite this quality. It is full of melody, which is nothing to surprise us coming from the author of *The Beggar's Opera* lyrics, and full of vivid picturings :

William, who high upon the yard  
 Rocked with the billow to and fro,  
 Soon as her well-known voice he heard









## GEORGE MACDONALD.

### § 1.

IT IS perhaps natural that in the course of that inevitable reaction by which the world seems to progress we should depreciate the value of our fathers' and grandfathers' art. Fashions in literature seem to recur in cycles of little less than three centuries, and it may be well on in the twenty-second century that Victorianism will come into its own again. Today, certainly, the writers of that age are already more or less in eclipse, and the novel, which as the youngest of our literary forms moves most quickly, shows this phenomenon most clearly of all. Even Dickens and Thackeray totter on their thrones ; Bulwer Lytton is as dead as the Czar ; George Eliot, Trollope, Charles Reade and the rest accumulate dust on the shelves of our 'gentlemen's libraries'.

With them has passed George Macdonald, a writer never among the very greatest in

repute among his own generation, but one who had certain merits in as high a degree as any one in our literary history. He was definitely and avowedly a Christian teacher; strongly, even bitterly (as far as the word may be used of a good man) undenominational, and tending always to a mysticism with which his age was in small sympathy, but never getting away from the standpoint of practical Christian ethics.

Unfortunately for MacDonald's popularity most readers of 'religious' fiction are sectarian, while those average people who 'profess and call themselves Christian' and are content with that, are averse from anything that is demonstratively pious. The critically instructed cry, 'A novel with a purpose!'—and turn to a novel of which the purpose is merely commercial. MacDonald is an artist and his aim is to create a beautiful image which may inspire the world to make itself more beautiful. But human character, which is what MacDonald represents, is then in his eyes most beautiful when it is most Christlike, so that his heroes have always in them, as far as human frailties permit, something of the spirit of Christ. Of theology there is none in his novels, of doctrine there



is much, but it is never more than the dramatic situation permits, a true expression of a character whose actions are intimately connected with the plot; and the value of his morality lies in this fact, that he depicts Christian virtue not in the abstract or cloistered but in action and on the battlefield of his own countyside.

## § 2.

George MacDonald was born at Huntly in Aberdeenshire in the year 1824. He was a Celt, and his native mysticism was in no way driven out of him by his upbringing in the strict Calvinist doctrine. Of his school-days at the local school and his college days in Aberdeen his many fictional representations of these things give, cumulatively, a full and faithful picture. We cannot be mistaken in figuring him as suffering under the tawse of a well-meaning but mechanically minded dominie; being drilled into a knowledge of the vernacular and classical languages; admiring the alien culture of some southron lady; spending happy holidays out on the farm; going by coach or by foot, to the granite city to sit for a bursary; then passing through the various stages from

*bejan to magistrand.* At this point the seeker after autobiography might well be misled into thinking that medicine rather than the Kirk was his hero's destination, for Christ and the Christlike man, in MacDonald's most usual presentation, are healers of mankind, not priests. It was, however, for the ministry that MacDonald was intended and he was actually licensed to a church at Arundel in Sussex, after a course of study at a theological college in north London.

But theology, distinct from practical morality, had for him no interest, and his flock, who battered only on the food they were used to, complained of his lack of sound doctrinal learning. Whereupon MacDonald gave up the ministry and became a free-lance, serving Christ as best he might, preaching without payment in any pulpit and eventually joining the Church of England, but as a layman and reserving his right to preach to congregations of any denomination. He settled in Hammersmith, living in the house which came later to be known as Kelmscott House. He had a wide acquaintance among the intellectuals of the day, and his personality enforced the sane, virile, moral influence of his writing. He wrote novels,



mystic and historical romances, literary and religious essays, and poetry, and in everything, if he did not attain equal success, he expressed alike his own strong and sincere character, which enabled him to appeal to every degree and to every age.

The list of his books is a long one and it is hard to resist the impression that he wrote with too great facility. It is not that he ever wrote anything that was not worth writing or that did not come from his heart, but he did not always avoid a tendency to follow too readily the line of least resistance, which leads here to a slightly conventional turn in his plot, there to the repetition of a minor trait or incident in one of his other books. Yet even as I hint a fault I feel it would not be easy wholly to substantiate it. Most of the stuff of MacDonald's novels is taken from the life, and his characters have interests and experiences closely akin to his own. Snowball fights; great floods; medical studies; instrumental music; a rather curious regard for India as a home of mystic philosophy and great wealth; a fondness for dumb animals, particularly dogs and horses; 'unco guid' ministers and other ministers not so good but even more given to 'bleth-

er'; religiously-minded working men, shepherds, usually, or soutars; repentant Magdalens; little girls, precocious and abnormally sensitive to the latent spiritual qualities in their robust boy companions; vicious young lairds; young women of a more cultured English type, markedly Victorian; these, and a little too much in the 'airy, fairy Lilian' manner—the reader of any two or three of MacDonald's novels will recognize almost all these ingredients. Yet it is unfair to suggest that they ever become stale with use. They are the fit material of a story which comes from the author's imagination and heart, as well as from his brain and his experience. A great many of the novels introduce the same characters, and MacDonald, though he lived his later years in England, wrote best when his scenes and personages were those which had impressed his imaginative boyhood.

### § 3.

*Robert Falconer* is by general consent the first among the novels. Robert himself takes rank as one of the great creations of literature, and it is, when all is done, by the vividness and originality of their characters



that novels take a permanent place among the classics. He has all the qualities which MacDonal'd would have us most reverence, utter sincerity, notably in rejecting the harsh austerities of his grandmother's Calvinism, and a noble piety which expresses itself in a desire to serve, to live up to the spirit of Christ's great injunction 'thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'. Robert's childhood is painted with extraordinary skill. With his faithful henchman Shargar, his intemperate friend 'Dooble Sanny', and his well-loved fiddle, we know him and his way of living and thinking as fiction seldom helps us to know its personages; and to know these folk, thorough rascals though one of them was in the world's eyes, is to love them. 'Dooble Sanny' is again typical of MacDonal'd's favourites. He has many vices, but he could love much and to him much is forgiven. Always we feel that MacDonal'd's sympathies are with Fielding rather than with Richardson, and though Tom Jones was far too licentious a young man to make a suitable hero for one of MacDonal'd's books, in his freedom from hypocrisy he possesses the one indispensable (though by no means all-sufficing) virtue.

The Calvinistic old Mrs. Falconer, in whose heart humanity is ever struggling with a narrow, dogmatic religion, is as fine a character study, on a smaller scale, as her grandson, and it is the home scenes in which all these admirable characters figure that make the real greatness of the novel. The whole Kail-yard school never bettered this as a presentation of village life.

There are many moving passages and situations in the story. I will mention only two. Robert's father had deserted his family before the story opens, and his wife is now dead. His mother, though she fronts the world proudly and austere, spends her life in secret prayer that her son may yet be convinced of sin and repent and be saved before he dies. When at last she gets seemingly certain news of his death but none of the prayed for repentance, she is stricken to the heart, and at the same time more determined than ever that no weakness on her part shall make easy the path of destruction for her grandson. Meanwhile, Robert, at the bidding of his heart, has rejected his grandmother's pessimistic acceptance of doom. His eventual resolve is to find and redeem his father, whom he will not believe dead; but



long ere that is arrived at he has dared to rebel, and his rebellion comforts his grandmother against all her convictions. The passage in which the pious rebel expresses his faith in God's mercy is a fine one, written, like all MacDonald's most moving utterances, in Scots. After Sunday supper and the Bible reading, Robert turns the conversation to the subject of Christ's suffering for the sins of the world. From this he proceeds to proclaim his solution of the problem of his father's damnation:

'A' them 'at sits doon to the supper o' the Lamb 'll sit there because Christ suffert the punishment due to their sins—winna they, grannie?'

'Doobtless, laddie.'

'But it'll be some sair upo' them to sit there aitin' an' drinkin' an' talkin' awa', and enjoyin' themsel's, whan ilka noo an' than there'll come a sough o' wailin' up frae the ill place, an' a smell o' burnin' ill to bide.'

.....  
'Duv ye think, grannie, that a body wad be allowed to speak a word i' public, like, there—at the long table, like, I mean?'

'What for no, gin it was dune wi' modesty, and for a guid rizzon? But railly, laddie, I doobt ye're haverin' a' thegither. Ye hard naething like that, I'm sure, the day, frae Mr. Maccleary.'

'Na, na; he said naething about it. But maybe I'll gang and speir at him, though.'

'What about?'

'What I'm gaein' to tell ye, grannie.'  
 'Well, tell awa', and hae dune wi't.'

'Well, gin I win in there, the verra first nicht I sit down wi' the lave o' them, I'm gaein' to rise up and say—that is gin the Maister, at the head o' the table, disna bid me sit doon—an' say: "Brithers an' sisters, the haill o' ye, hearken to me for ae minute; an' O Lord! gin I say wrang jist tak the speech frae me, and I'll sit doon dumb an' rebukit. We're a' here by grace and no by merit, save His, as ye a' ken better nor I can tell ye, for ye hae been langer here nor me. But it's jist ruggin' and rivin' at my hert to think o' them 'at's doon there. Maybe ye can hear them. I canna. Noo, we hae nae merit, an' they hae nae merit, an' what for are we here and them there? But we're washed clean and innocent noo; and noo, whan there's nowyte lying upo' oursel's it seems to me that we micht beir some o' the sins o' them 'at hae ower mony. I call upo' ilk ane o' ye 'at has a frien or a neebor down yonner, to rise up an' taste nor bite nor sup mair till we gang up a' thegither to the fut o' the throne, and pray the Lord to lat's gang and du as the Maister did afore's, and bier their griefs, and cairry their sorrows down in hell there: gin it may be that they may repent and get remission o' their sins, an' come up here, wi' us at the lang last, and sit doon wi's at this table, a' throw the merits o' oor Saviour Jesus Christ, at the heid o' the table there. Amen."

This naive refusal of the doctrine of eternal damnation is characteristic of Mac-Donald, but it comes with wonderful dramatic force in its context. This simple and logical application of the root principles of



Christianity supplies a motive in almost all MacDonald's other novels.

Another fine and finely used incident is Mrs. Falconer's sacrificial burning, in an excess of puritanic zeal, of Robert's beloved and valuable fiddle, his 'bonnie leddy'. Robert, coming home to dinner, sees his violin burning in the fire.

All its strings were shrivelled up save one, which burst as he gazed. And beside, stern as a Druidess, sat his grandmother in her chair, feeding her eyes with grim satisfaction on the detestable sacrifice.

To appreciate the emotion of this incident we must have seen Robert, as MacDonald has made us see him, making the 'bonny leddy', which had been his father's (whence Mrs. Falconer's fear of its influence), the voice of his soul, a veritable David's harp for godly utterance. He goes to his bedroom presently, after seeing his music-room, the old factory shed, demolished, and cuts loose his favourite kite, his 'dragon', which floats out of his window secured to the bed-rail:

Whether it was from the stinging thought that the true skysoarer, the violin, having been devoured by the jaws of the firedevil, there was no longer any significance in the outward and visible sign of the dragon, or from a dim feeling that the time of kites was gone by and manhood on the threshold, I cannot tell; but he drew his knife from his pocket, and with one down-stroke cut the string in

twain. Away went the dragon, free like a prodigal, to his ruin. And with the dragon, afar into the past, flew the childhood of Robert Falconer. He made one remorseful dart after the string as it swept out of the skylight, but it was gone beyond remeid. And never more, save in twilight dreams, did he lay hold on his childhood again.

This is true tragedy, for Robert's fiddle had voiced no sin in his hands, and his grandmother was a great-hearted woman and never, for all her austerity, loses our affection. It is her intense desire to save the son from the dangers that had overcome the father that makes her imperil his soul by submitting it to a test which all her moral discipline would never have enabled it to survive, but for that deep and emotional yearning after God which she so misunderstood and distrusted.

#### § 4.

Second among the novels I incline to place *Sir Gibbie*. It is not as a whole the equal of *Robert Falconer*. The tendency to melodrama, which extends in the latter book only to the excessive 'make up' of some of the minor characters, notably the more cultured ones, the 'villain', Lord Rothie, and the weak 'heroine', Mysie, here affects the plot. In *Robert Falconer* the improbable discovery



of his father does not really affect the fabric of the book. In *Sir Gibbie* the 'missing heir' motive which strains our credulity is the very warp of its material, and the mental and physical accomplishments of *Sir Gibbie*, the dumb, starved uneducated waif, are almost beyond nature.

Yet it is the character of Sir Gibbie, a beautiful and by no means ineffectual angel, that gives the book its great charm, though the idyllic chapters of life on the mountain farm furnish a worthy background. Here too we first meet Donal Grant, the shepherd poet, into whose mouth MacDonalld puts some of his best dialect verses, and from no book can more sentences be quoted expressive of his sane and lofty philosophy of life. Sir Gibbie is akin to that great type, Ivan the Fool, the divinely inspired simpleton, who takes Christ's teaching literally and applies it in the workaday world, of which Dostoieffski's *The Idiot* is the most famous example in modern literature. Robert Falconer had something of this quality, but Sir Gibbie, who is of intent made an altogether abnormal person, has far more. Indeed his guardian, the Reverend Mr. Sclater, a good man within limits, has to remove the Bible from his

parlour lest his ward be moved to further breaches of the *convenances*.

There is no need to discuss the other novels in detail. Some, *David Elginbrod* for example, and *Alec Forbes*, are little behind the first two. Generally it may be said of Mac Donald as of Scott, that he writes better of Scotland than of England, and that the higher ranks of the gentry appear to less advantage than the peasantry; not because they are intended to have less moral excellence, but because they lack the ruggedness and directness wherein lies the strength of Mac Donald's portraiture. Similarly his men are better than his women. With children of either sex he is at home, and his old women and sterner peasant types are admirable, but the mature maidens of his stories are a thought too near to 'bread and butter misses' for his sturdy, downright young Scotsmen.

One point in which Sir Gibbie has the advantage over *Robert Falconer* is in the superiority of Ginny over Mysie or Miss St. John. But Ginny is still little more than a child when the book ends, and even she hardly holds her own beside Gibbie and Donal. *Alec Forbes* boasts quite a charming little heroine, but she like Ginny is still in her



teens when we leave her. *David Elginbrod*, the book by which MacDonald first made his name, has too much of Bulwer's spurious romanticism, the current influence of the period in this direction being strengthened in MacDonald's case by that of his German master in romantic mysticism, Novalis. The women here suffer from a double portion of the defects of the whole book. The first few chapters, where the scene is laid in the Highland country-side and in which alone David appears in the flesh, are by far the best in the book, and the discerning critic might have foretold wherein MacDonald's strength and weakness were to lie.

§ 5.

MacDonald's claims to consideration as a novelist are great, and it is hence perhaps that his widest fame must be looked for; but he achieved even greater success in another field. As a teller of fairy stories of two distinct, though related, kinds he is peerless. I remember as a boy reading *The Princess and the Goblins*, and its sequel *The Princess and Curdie*, and being enthralled by them. They excited wonder at the events and admiration for the personages. They are in

fact stories with original and novel plots (though that is of less importance in a fairy story than in any other) and characters; and MacDonald, with his imagination for ever inspired by the beauty of nature, imparts loveliness as well to the outward show as to the inward meaning. Twenty years later I reread these stories, expecting, as has, alas, so often happened in like cases, to be disillusioned. But no, I was as much charmed as ever. I can only repeat, for to dissect a fairy story is as unworthy a task as to explain a jest, that, except by Hans Andersen, MacDonald is unrivalled as a modern maker of fairy tales.

The moral beauty of these stories, of which the child of course is not consciously aware, lies principally in this—that MacDonald never lets his allegory obtrude (as Kingsley's I fear does in *The Water Babies*) and that he is content to let us forget it occasionally to moralize only such parts as he safely may and to leave the delightful tale to run its own course. He makes use of the river; he does not dig a canal.

*At the Back of the North Wind*, a tale with a less romantic setting, lacks this supreme virtue—it is not a yarn, and appeals to me



least of all the better known fairy tales. The shorter tales, *The Light Princess* and its fellows, have all the beautiful imaginative-ness of *Curdie*; all display MacDonald's talent for combining mythmaking with pure story telling, if indeed the story element be not the prime element in all good myth.

But the greatest of MacDonald's writings are in that other mode of fairy tale represented by his first and his last prose books, *Phantastes* (1858) and *Lilith* (1895). Here the mystic that he always was is in full control of his invention. Through all his novels runs this sense of natural things as symbols of things spiritual—witness the passage quoted above of the dragon-kite, emblem of Robert Falconer's passing youth. He many times asserted the inadequacy of the material to express the spiritual. Of Robert Falconer he wrote :

He saw that any true revelation must come out of the unknown in God through the unknown in man . . . that only as life grows and unfolds can the ever-lagging intellect gain glimpses of partial outlines fading away into the infinite—that indeed only in material things and the laws belonging to them, are outlines possible—even then, only on the pictures of them which the mind that analyses them makes for itself, not in the things themselves.

In one of his critical essays, he wrote, 'All that moves in the mind is symbolized in Nature'; and 'The imagination of man has the divine function of putting thought into form'. It 'turns inside out'; and the end of imagination is 'harmony'. Thus neither simple observation and description of nature, nor yet reverie—vague and formless dreaming,—satisfies him. By the exercise of imagination man must reconstruct the world as God's mind projected it—there lies true beauty. Also man's physical powers must serve his imagination, and, working on the material actually at hand, try to bring the world up to the ideal.

In all his novels he has this object before him, to paint the world as it is, but also to show how much of its spirit is really the spirit of Christ. In his fairy tales of the first class he deals still with characters of which even the supernatural ones are highly anthropomorphic, and in any case as real to children as any other persons in fiction. In the tales of the second class he gives his imagination freer play. He is not speaking in allegory so much as creating or revealing a new world in which the spiritual is more directly and clearly bodied forth. 'The imagination of



man has the divine function of putting thought into form'. Which is more, be it noted, than expounding the thought that underlies a sensibly perceived form. He draws a distinction too between *embodying* ideas and merely clothing them in words, which is what Shelley, in his view, too often does.

*Phantastes* is far the earlier and the better known book. Anodos, the hero, finds his way into Fairy-land, a country which indeed is always with us, concealed as it were in the interstices of this waking world. He takes part in the continual warfare between the spirits of good and evil; but MacDonald's tales are never oppressively allegorical; he is rather a maker of myths, fashioning beautiful shapes and living characters, which we feel to be symbols but never *mere* symbols. The tale is always capable of objective interest for a child.

*Lilith*, forty years later, shows even greater skill in this respect. Though the spiritual import is even deeper and more beautiful, it has yet more charm as a story of human adventure in Fairy-land. In the earlier book there is discernible a trace of the artificial, sentimental German romance of Novalis. In

*Lilith* the poet's imagination creates a new world, clear yet shadowed, filled with strange beasts, a magic, romantic country, yet seeming to show us the reality that lies at the back of our normal world. The wonderful beast Lena and the charming Little Ones are in the most literal sense creations, seemingly natural, yet not with the nature of our waking world. The descriptions of the sleeping of the dead with their first forebears, Adam and Lilith, might have been given visible expression by the imagination of William Blake.

MacDonald is a remarkable blend (much more remarkable from its rarity than such a blend need or should be) of the accurate observer and the visionary. He has painted pictures, faithful in the letter and in the spirit, of Scots peasant life. He has painted other pictures that embody his own spiritual vision. But he never loses sight of the actual in depicting the ideal, nor of the ideal in depicting the actual. There are angels in his kailyards, to those who have the vision to see them. There are human passions in the heart of his mythical creatures. He is a true opener of doors in the wall that divides the material from the spiritual realm. Anodos



and Diamond can find their way into Fairyland. So can ministers of grace come from the spirit world and inform the lives of Sir Gibbie, of Robert Falconer, of David Elginbrod.

### § 6.

As a poet even more than as a prose romancer, MacDonald's fame falls short of his deserts. He had vision, he had interpretive powers. He chiefly lacks that easy command of rhythm and harmonious numbers which if it is the least is at least one of the necessary attributes of a poet, without which the most gifted seer cannot make his message ring home to the hearts of his hearers. There are lines in MacDonald's verse which have a most graceful and engaging melody—some of his songs sing themselves in the true lyric fashion, witness the well-known

Alas, how easily things go wrong,  
A sigh too much and a kiss too long ;  
And there follows a mist and a weeping rain,  
And life is never the same again.

in *Phantastes*, or

Love me, beloved, for one must lie  
Motionless, lifeless, beneath the sky;  
The stiff pale lips return no kiss  
To the lips that never brought love amiss ;

And the dark brown earth be heaped above  
The head that lay on the bosom of love.

*(Within and Without, Part IV.)*

MacDonald's ear was often caught by beautiful cadences, but it was too little critical and would accept too much that fell too far short of his own best music. Often, too, he seems not to have realized that the rhythm with which a phrase associated itself in his own ear might not inevitably suggest itself to another's. He was, one would suppose, a facile writer and, intent on saying his say, not disposed to any meticulous study of the technique of his own verse, a weakness pardonable in a poet who is lyrical always, who 'pipes but as the linnets do', but serious in an intellectual who is bent on giving poetic form to much that does not sing its own tune but calls for the application of a deliberate, artistic method.

It is unfortunate too for his fame in the eyes of the present generation that in his long poems, as to some extent in his novels, MacDonald allowed himself to be influenced by the prevailing fashion of his youth, the fashion of the 'spasmodics', from which not even Tennyson or the Brownings kept themselves free. This sort of poetry involved the



use of a rather sentimental and often morbid story, in which the almost inevitable flatness of certain mechanically necessary parts is relieved (or, alas, emphasized) by a use of emotional language that too often rings false—exclamations, sobs, laboured heightenings of style, pathetic fallacies and all the tricks, justified only by a success which leaves the critic breathless, of the poetic trade.

The play *Within and Without*, MacDonald's first poetic fruit, is in parts moving, proceeding from and inspiring genuine emotion. The blank verse is full of colour and variety, but the piece is not designed for the stage and lacks the continuity and single largeness of tragedy, so that it strikes the reader today as prolix, garrulous, and too facile in its handling of passion.

*A Hidden Life*, which followed, tells us much that is interesting and true concerning the growth of the poetic faculty, but the story is morbid and the manner febrile. Yet it is a better poem than Buchanan's *Idylls* to which (as well as in a less degree to Tennyson's) it bears a likeness.

*The Disciple* inaugurates a more pronouncedly religious vein in MacDonald's poetry,

and no poet since the 17th century has written on these themes with more passionate sincerity or more adequate mastery of language. Particularly beautiful are some of his sonnets, of which, beginning with those inserted in *Within and Without*, he wrote a large number, striking at times a truly Miltonic chord. In his form MacDonald is deliberately original, employing the Italian scheme of rhyme, but using as a rule two septets instead of an octave and sestet, thus,

THE CHRYSALIS.

Methought I floated sightless, nor did know  
 That I had ears until I heard the cry  
 As of a mighty man in agony;  
 "How long, Lord, shall I lie thus foul and slow?  
 The arrows of thy lightning through me go,  
 And sting and torture me—yet here I lie  
 A shapeless mass that scarce can mould a sigh!"  
 The darkness thinned; I saw a thing below  
 Like sheeted corpse, a knot at head and feet.  
 Slow clomb the sun the mountains of the dead,  
 And looked upon the world: the silence broke!  
 A blinding struggle! then the thunderous beat  
 Of great exulting pinions stroke on stroke!  
 And from that world a mighty angel fled.

This is not a faultless sonnet. The frequent exclamation marks suggest a jerkiness alien to the true sonnet manner, and 'a blinding struggle' is not a happy phrase. But there is vision, and a volume of sound, and that indefinable quality which stirs emotion.



## § 7.

In everything George MacDonald wrote and in every fact recorded of his life the same qualities are manifest, the spiritual fervour and the intellectual sincerity of the man. It is in relation to these qualities that all the characters of his fiction are portrayed. Their success or failure in life is measured by their keeping or losing their hold on these essentials, and the art of the writer lies in making his readers accept always his standard, in compelling their sympathies to run with his, not with the world's.

To MacDonald, as to his Master, charity is the greatest of the virtues, and charity is love and personal service: not love without service nor yet, I think, service without love; not the mere giving of alms or a placid indulgence in platitudes. Everywhere he demands the warmth of the heart rather than the brilliance of the intellect. He is for ever denouncing the oratorical fireworks of the pulpit. It is impossible to read his reproof of 'the pyrotechnist of human logic' without remembering the complaints of his Arundel congregation, who would doubtless have welcomed this very thing, concerning his own doctrinal shortcomings. *Sir*

*Gibbie* and *Robert Falconer* abound in variations on this theme, no less than his poetry which, after all, does but chrystalize the philosophical teaching of his prose.

As with religious so with mundane knowledge, he mistrusts whatever comes not from the man himself. Books are an instrument of culture, not a source of opinions. His ideal scholar is he who, like the hero of *A Hidden Life*, uses his book-learning to deepen and enrich his practical life, who,

Too wise to fancy that a gulf gaped wide  
Betwixt the labouring hand and thinking brain,

stayed a farmer all his days and sought only to be a better farmer and a better man.

It is this passionate devotion to the good that springs out of a man's own blood that makes MacDonald, though himself an exile from his native land, a zealot for the homely Scots speech, and heats his wrath against those who from an affectation of gentility employ in their own homes the tongue of the Southerner.

If love has the first place in MacDonald's ethical system, the other two of the trio of Christian cardinal virtues are not ignored. Faith and Hope proceed the one from the other. He who has faith in God cannot lack

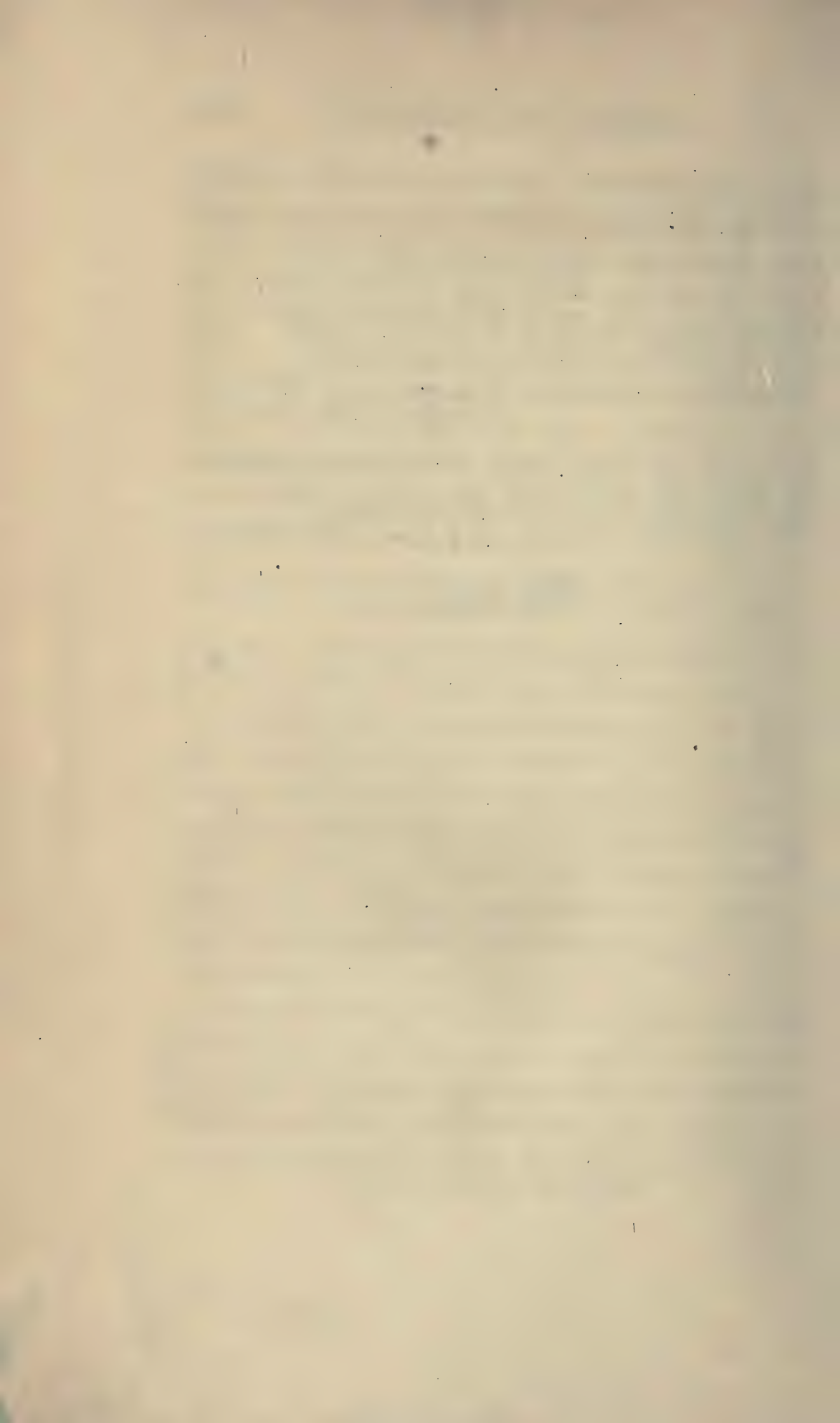


hope, and MacDonald has no doubt of the ultimate triumph of God :

And should the twilight darken into night  
And sorrow grow to anguish, be thou strong;  
Thou art in God, and nothing can go wrong  
Which a fresh life-pulse cannot set aright.  
And do not fear to hope. Can poet's brain  
More than the Father's heart rich good invent?  
*(Within and Without, Part IV.)*

Work on, one day, beyond all thoughts of praise,  
A sunny joy will crown thee with its rays;  
Nor other than thy joy thy recompense.  
*(Within and Without, Part V.)*

THE END.













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